

**Work to be done? Exploring the Current  
Contribution of Educational Psychologists to  
Special Schools which Cater for Children and Young  
People with Profound and Multiple Learning  
Difficulties (PMLD)**

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements of the  
University of East London for the degree of Professional Doctorate in  
Educational and Child Psychology

## **Declaration**

This work has not previously been accepted for any degree and is not currently being submitted for any other degrees.

This research is being submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements of the University of East London for the degree of Applied Educational and Child Psychology. The thesis is a result of my own work and investigation, except where otherwise stated. Other sources are acknowledged by explicit references in the text. A full reference list is included in the thesis.

I hereby give permission for my thesis, if accepted, to be available for reading and for inter-library loan, and for the title and summary to be made available to outside organisations.

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**Sophie Winter**

**March 2017**

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## **Abstract**

This exploratory study aimed to discover the current contribution of Educational Psychologists to special schools catering for children and young people (CYP) with profound and multiple learning difficulties (PMLD) from the perspective of educational psychologists (EPs) and special school staff. A systematic literature review highlighted that no research has been carried out in this area. It did however highlight other areas of research previously undertaken in regards to CYP with PMLD and research which had captured the views of educational psychologists and (special) school staff. The research was carried out in light of the recognition that an increasing number of CYP with PMLD are entering specialist provision and an identified role for EPs in working with children who have severe, complex or challenging needs.

The researcher created an online survey which was distributed to 146 Educational Psychology Service across England in addition to independent and private EPs. The survey was also sent to 288 special schools across England, identified as catering for CYP with PMLD. A number of 207 responses were received from EPs and 44 from special school staff. The quantitative data was analysed using descriptive statistics and the qualitative data was analysed using quantitative and qualitative content analysis.

Important findings regarding the current contribution EPs are making to these specialist settings was highlighted in addition to potential barriers and opportunities to practice. The impact of this on future EP practice and research implications are also discussed.

*Key words: Educational Psychologist, Educational Psychology Service, Special School, Profound and Multiple Learning Difficulties, Special Educational Needs.*

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## **List of Abbreviations**

<b>SEN</b>	Special Educational Needs
<b>EPS</b>	Educational Psychology Service
<b>PMLD</b>	Profound and Multiple Learning Difficulties
<b>LA</b>	Local Authority
<b>UEL</b>	University of East London
<b>CYP</b>	Child and Young People
<b>SLD</b>	Severe Learning Difficulties
<b>MLD</b>	Moderate Learning Difficulties
<b>HCPC</b>	Health and Care Professionals Council
<b>DoH</b>	Department of Health
<b>DfE</b>	Department for Education
<b>DfEE</b>	Department for Employment and Education
<b>DfES</b>	Department for Education and Skills
<b>EHCP</b>	Education, Health and Care Plan
<b>PIMD</b>	Profound Intellectual Multiple Disabilities
<b>SEND CoP</b>	Special Educational Needs and Disability Code of Practice
<b>EP</b>	Educational Psychologist
<b>PEP</b>	Principal Educational Psychologist
<b>SENCo</b>	Special Educational Needs Coordinator
<b>SLT</b>	Speech and Language Therapist
<b>TA</b>	Teaching Assistant
<b>OT</b>	Occupational Therapist
<b>VIG</b>	Video Interactive Guidance
<b>VERP</b>	Video Enhanced Reflective Practice

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## **Chapter 1: Introduction**

### **1.1. Introduction to the Current Chapter**

This chapter introduces the research and the context within which it was undertaken. It begins with a definition of the primary terms used in the research, in order to aid the reader's understanding (1.2). Next, the current research is placed in the national context (1.3) in addition to the local context (1.4). Educational Psychology Services (EPS) delivery model is discussed (1.5) alongside the 'unique' setting of special schools, in particular those which cater for children and young people (CYP) with PMLD (1.6). Legislation related to CYP with Profound and Multiple Learning Difficulties (PMLD) is then described (1.7). Next, the role of the Educational Psychologist (EP) in supporting PMLD schools is explored (1.8) alongside that of other multidisciplinary professionals (1.9). The chapter then explains the purpose of the research and what led the researcher to undertake this research (1.10). Finally, the research questions are stated (1.11) and the chapter is summarised (1.12).

### **1.2 Definition of Terms**

Some of the regularly used terms within this research are explained to facilitate the reader's understanding. This is necessary as there is a great range of terminology used within society and the educational settings for CYP with special educational needs (SEN). The author begins with exploring definitions related to profound and multiple learning difficulties (PMLD), an area of focus in the present study. Following this, terms related to special educational needs

(SEN) and special school provision in England are defined, as they represent the other focus area of the current research related to educational settings for CYP with PMLD. Lastly, definitions of children and young people are briefly explored.

### **1.2.1 Profound and Multiple Learning Difficulties: Definitions**

Thinking around CYP with profound and multiple learning difficulties (PMLD) is said to vary amongst theorists (Jones, 2005). The World Health Organisation (1992) defined CYP with PMLD as those having an IQ under 20 (WHO, 1992 as cited in PMLD Network, 2001). An emphasis on a range of impairments, including cognitive, personal and skill deficits with the perception of deterioration of these skills has been highlighted (Ouvrey, 1987 as cited in Jones, 2005). Ouvrey (1987)

Simmons and Bayliss (2007) note that in addition to their cognitive delays, they also experience additional forms of disability such as sensory impairment and/or physical. As such they are highly dependent on others for their basic care needs and considered to have lifelong support needs (Carnaby & Cambridge, 2002 as cited in Simmons and Bayliss, 2007).

Lacey and Ouvrey (1998) provided a more holistic and positive definition of PMLD, a shift away from the deficit model, which represented a collaborative approach between those involved in supporting the CYP with PMLD in addition to the consideration of the abilities as well as the profound difficulties they experience (Lacey & Ouvrey, 1998 as cited in Jones, 2005). Simmons and Bayliss, 2007 highlight the importance of acknowledging those CYP identified

as having PMLD's individual and diverse abilities in addition to each child individually in order to understand the behaviours and interactions of each CYP (Simmons and Bayliss, 2007).

The Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) Code of Practice (CoP) (Department of Health & Department for Education, 2015) states that children with PMLD are likely to have severe and complex learning difficulties as well as physical difficulties and/or sensory impairments. This is encompassed under the Cognition and Learning area of need in the CoP.

The literature suggests that profound and multiple learning difficulties and profound and multiple learning disabilities are often used interchangeably. The PMLD Network argues that the need for clarity and consistency in terminology is essential so that 'the population of children and adults with PMLD can be counted and, more importantly, their needs fully understood' (PMLD Network, 2001). For clarity, the term profound and multiple learning difficulties will be used in the body of this research thesis, in line with the definition the SEND CoP offers.

### **1.2.2 Special Educational Needs**

In 2014, the SEND CoP was published (Department for Education and Department of Health, 2015). The SEND CoP states that 'a child or young person has SEN if they have a learning difficulty or disability which calls for special educational provision to be made for him or her' (2015, p15). The introduction of the new SEND CoP led to the introduction of the Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP). LAs are currently in the process of 'transferring'



the previous statement of SEN which the children and young people received to an EHCP. It is likely however that a large majority of the CYP with PMLD currently in specialist provision were assessed following the legislation outlined in the 2001 code of practice (DfES, 2001). This is in addition to those who have been assessed under the new code of practice and received a transfer of their statement to an EHCP.

In January 2015, the Department for Education (DfE) reported that 15.4% of pupils in England were identified as having SEN (DfE, 2015) - this equates to 1,301,445 pupils. It is noted that there is a decrease since 2010, due to the decrease in SEN without an Education, Health and Care (EHC) plan. There are currently 2.8% of pupils in schools in England who have a statement of SEN or an EHC plan. This is equal to 236,165 pupils.

### **1.2.3 Special Schools and Types of Provision**

Of the 2.8% of children with a statement of SEN, 40.5% of them attend a specialist provision maintained by the LA (DfE, 2014). Additionally, there are independent specialist provisions. Special schools are increasingly catering for CYP with PMLD, often providing a separate provision for these students with specific needs within their intake of other needs, including SLD.

The government states that special schools with pupils aged 11 and older can specialise in 1 of 4 areas of SEN. This includes communication and interaction; cognition and learning; social, emotional and mental health and sensory and physical needs. Schools are then entitled to further specialise within these

categories in order to reflect the special needs they cater for, such as ASD or hearing impairment (Gov.UK, 2017).

#### **1.2.3.1 Local Authority Maintained Special Schools**

Many special schools are overseen or 'maintained' by the LA. These includes voluntary-aided schools, the majority of which are faith schools and voluntary controlled schools directed by the LA. Community special schools are controlled and managed by the LA, who employs the staff, owns the building and land and sets the admission arrangements. Finally, foundation or trust special schools are schools run by their governing body who employ the staff and set own admissions criteria.

#### **1.2.3.2 Independent Special Schools**

Some special schools are independent of the LA. The Children and Families Act (2014) gives parents and young people the right to express a preference for independent specialist provision during the EHCP process. It must however be defined as an 'Independent Special School' under section 41 of the Children and Families Act 2014 for the LA to have a duty to name this provision (DfE, 2014). Those not named as an Independent Special School do not have to adhere to the SEND CoP, which means provision for those with SEN can vary greatly between different, non-special independent schools. They are however subject to disability discrimination legislation including the Equality Act (2010).

### **1.2.3.3 Non-maintained Special Schools**

Non-Maintained Special Schools (NMSS) are schools for children with SEN approved by the Secretary of State for Education under Section 342 of the Education Act 1996 as independent special schools. They teach children with SEN, are independent of the LA control and run on a not-for-profit basis. They also must demonstrate that they operate at a level at least equivalent to state maintained special schools (DfE, 2015).

### **1.2.4 Children and Young People**

The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child defines a child as everyone under 18, with the UK ratifying this convention (UN General Assembly Resolution 44/25, 1989). Again, the United Nations defines persons between the ages of 15 and 24 as youth or young people (UN General Assembly 56/180, 2001). In the SEND CoP, a 'young person' is considered to be a person over compulsory school age (16) and under 25, whilst a 'child' is below 16 years old. This research aims to investigate primarily the contribution EPs make to special schools which cater for CYP with PMLD, as defined by the CoP.

## **1.3 National Context**

A significant increase in the number of CYP with PMLD has been reported by head teachers of special schools within the UK (Male & Rayner, 2007). More recently, it has been reported that 17% of children with PMLD are educated in a

mainstream environment, leaving a large proportion (83% or 8,736) in special schools (Public Health England, 2014).

Indeed, the vital need to prepare for the impact in the education system as special schools receive more profoundly disabled young children has been emphasised (Carpenter, Egerton, Brooks, Cockbill, Fotheringham & Rawson, 2011). As highlighted in this report, one governor reported *“the diverse range of children...is causing us to restructure our school”* (op cit., p7). The increased levels of support CYP with PMLD require as learners has also been noted, presenting with diverse abilities and individual characteristics and behaviours which requires appropriate education (Jones, 2005).

Professionals must therefore be prepared to meet the challenges of the changing demographic makeup of students entering the nation's schools (Ysseldyke, Burns, Dawson, Kelley, Morrison, Ortiz & Telzrow, 2006). This is particularly pertinent to the role of the EP, whose role includes not only supporting and responding to the needs of the CYP but also supporting the schools within which they reside.

Several reports have also noted that special schools want more specialist advice in order to enable them to function in an effective way, with the suggestion that EPs need to develop particular specialism to be used as a source of knowledge or expertise when working with children with the most severe and complex needs (DfEE, 2000; Farrell, Woods, Lewis, Rooney, Squires, & O'Connor, 2006). The DfEE report (2000) noted that special schools often feel that their own staff have more specialist knowledge than individual

EPs about particular types of special needs because they engage with them on a daily basis (DfEE, 2000).

This is reiterated in the Department for Education's 'Support and aspiration: A new approach to special educational needs and disability. A consultation' (2011). In this paper, the widening role of the EP is discussed. It is suggested that EPs can 'help develop the skills of teachers and other professionals working with pupils with SEN' (DfE, 2001, p135). In addition to this, it is suggested that when EPs are deployed to work directly with families, they can help parents understand their child's needs and guide them in the support required to help the child fulfil their potential.

#### **1.4 Local Context and Background**

Although the current research takes place on a national scale, there is also an important local context within which it can be placed. The EPS within which the researcher is placed has long considered their role within the specialist educational provisions in the county.

Having worked within special schools across two counties and as a trainee EP within a large LA EPS, there appears a prevailing discourse regarding complex relationships between EPSs and special schools. Professionals in both EPS and special school settings have provided support for the belief that this may be an enduring issue across many LAs. One LA indeed responded to this issue by carrying out a small appreciative enquiry piece of work which explored three LA maintained special schools views of the EPS. This included not only an

evaluation of the work the EPs carry out but also what special schools would like EPs to be able to provide in the future, with the aim of building more positive working relationships. This approach highlights that it may be, in part, the perceived contribution of the EP, which is an important factor in this.

### **1.5 Educational Psychology Services' Delivery Model**

Educational Psychology Services (EPSs) vary in regards to their structure and model of service delivery. Some are funded by the LA whereas others offer a part traded model. This means that educational institutions can purchase 'blocks' of time from the EPS in addition to the statutory time provided by the local authority. Fully traded models exist by educational institutes buying in all additional time to that given to providing statutory advice, which is funded by the LA.

There is also an increasing number of EPs working in private practices or as independent practitioners. Furthermore, there is a very small proportion of special schools that have an EP who works full time in their special school. EPs can also be employed directly by other services such as Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS), voluntary and charitable organisations, social enterprises, schools and school groups (both state and independent sector) and private consultancy firms. Some EPs are also employed as university lecturers and tutors on professional training courses for EPs.

## **1.6 'Unique' Specialist Educational Provision for CYP with PMLD**

Special schools are a unique form of provision (Rayner, Gunter, Thomas, Butt, & Lance, 2005). Considering the needs of the CYP with PMLD, they often require alternative and highly different resources, pedagogies and curricula based on their individual needs. Furthermore, it also concerns the wider context of the special school itself and the staff who work within it (Julian, 2002; Aires, 2000). Research has shown a significant positive association between the number of LSAs employed and the proportion of the pupils with PMLD in addition to their understanding of pedagogical approaches required and learning opportunities provided for CYP with PMLD (Male & Rayner, 2007; Simmons & Bayliss, 2007). EPs, with knowledge of a wide variety of disabilities and professional practice, may thus be well placed to provide training when the capacity is not available within the schools (Farrell et al, 2006).

In addition to developing understanding and skills related to the education of PMLD CYP, previous research indicates that there are significant emotional pressures which impact on staff that are particular to those working with pupils with PMLD. This includes a relatively high prevalence of challenging behaviour and characteristics which can make interactions difficult and potentially less satisfying for school staff (Ware, 1996; Kiernan & Kiernan, 2004). The report that the environment of a PMLD special school may be more emotionally demanding than other settings suggests that there may be a role for the EP in supporting them via avenues such as supervision. Skills possessed by EPs such as facilitation, mediation and problem solving are said to be key to helping

individuals from different professional backgrounds work in reflective ways and enhance practice (Farrell et al, 2006; Dunsmuir & Leadbetter, 2010).

Special schools are also known to host a variety of support services for their CYP. Research has found a significant positive association between the number of PMLD students and the number of hours provided by an Occupational Therapist (OT), Physiotherapist and Speech and Language Therapist (SLT) in addition to a variety of other support services (Male & Rayner, 2007). This is said to bring additional work pressures and demands for staff to be able to work as part of a cohesive and effective team (Aires, 2000). Effective training for staff in these environments could include training on effective multi-agency working practices and as EPs are experienced in working as part of a multiagency team, they may be well placed to provide this (Aires, 2000).

Special schools are said to value, and indeed want more time for the EPs to support the parents of the children in their school (DfEE, 2000). Research focused on parents of children with PMLD highlighted that parents may need additional support and guidance due to their child's additional complex needs (de Geeter, Poppes & Vlaskamp, 2002). Parents are reported to experience heightened concerns around their child's future, more medical problems as well as behavioural problems (Sloper, 2004).



## **1.7 Legislation**

Historically, students with PMLD would have been considered 'uneducable' and unlikely to attend any type of formal schooling (Varma, 2008). The 1970 Education (Handicapped Children) Act saw children with severe and profound learning difficulties moved from care settings to special schools, transferring the responsibility to the Department of Education and Science (GB.DES, 1970).

Article 2 of the First Protocol: Right to education of the Human Rights Act 1998, states that no one can be denied the right to an education. This includes the right to an effective education which is adequate and appropriate and access to existing educational institutions.

The Salamanca Statement (UNESCO, 1994) states that every child has its own individual traits, interests, abilities and learning needs and that mainstream schools with an 'inclusive orientation are the most effective means of combating discriminatory attitudes, creating welcoming communities, building an inclusive society and achieving education for all'.

The SEND CoP (2014) is a national statutory guidance for organisations which work with and support CYP who have SEN or disabilities. It resulted in an integrated assessment and where appropriate single EHCP for the support for those with more complex needs. The CoP provides statutory guidance on duties, policies and procedures relating to Part 3 of the Children and Families Act 2014. In addition to this, the CoP covers the 0-25 age range, representing a change in the practice of EPs who previously had primarily worked with students up until the age of 16 or 19 if in specialist educational provision.

Furthermore, there is an increased emphasis on the participation of children, young people and parents in decision making.

Guidance is provided on joint planning and commissioning of services 'to ensure close co-operation between education, health and social care' (op. cit. p14). EPs are referred to throughout the CoP in regards to assisting in better identifying needs and offering early support. It is noted that schools should work closely with the LA in making appropriate requests for specialist services which includes EPs. EPs also retained their role in providing psychological advice and information for an EHC plan needs assessment. It has been noted that EPs should remain involved in statutory assessment for children with severe and complex needs (Farrell et al, 2006). Moreover, it was acknowledged in the Green Paper that 'EPs can make a significant contribution to supporting families' (DfE, 2001. p104). This provides an additional avenue through which EPs may be able to contribute to PMLD special schools.

The SEND CoP provides a stronger emphasis on high aspirations and improving outcomes for children and young people, in addition to helping those with SEND make a successful transition to adulthood. It has been said that outcomes for CYP continue to be poor for those with PMLD.

## **1.8 The Role of the Educational Psychologist**

EPs are said to have a perennial obsession with reflecting on their role with the professional having difficulty in finding confidence in its role and contribution (Dessent, 1992 as cited in Boyle & Lauchlan, 2009; Lunt & Majors, 2000).

Previous research which gathered school staff's views on the contribution of the

EP to CYP with SEN took place in mainstream primary and secondary schools (Boyle & MacKay, 2007). Other research including special school teachers was conducted outside of the UK in the United States (Gilman & Medway, 2007). Furthermore, two papers published by the DfEE (Kelly & Gray, 2000 and Department for Education and Skills (Farrell et al, 2006) included views from both mainstream and special school teachers on the role of the EP.

In Farrell's report, all respondent groups identified an important role for EPs in working with children who have severe, complex or challenging needs (Farrell et al, 2006). One paper explored the potential role of the EP in relation to CYP with PMLD's inclusion into mainstream schools (Wills, 2006). A variety of different opportunities and contributions EPs could provide to facilitate inclusion, including direct training and group work to support social inclusion were highlighted. Furthermore, it has been noted that EPs should remain involved in statutory assessment for children with severe and complex needs as this may be an area in which EPs could make a significant contribution (DfE, 1998; Farrell et al, 2006).

Previous literature has predominantly focused on the contribution of the EP to mainstream school settings (Gilman & Gabriel, 2004; Boyle & Mackay, 2007). The contribution of the EP specifically to PMLD special schools is yet to be researched however and indeed, this will be the first time the views of the EP and PMLD special schools will be collected concurrently.

### **1.9 Multiprofessional Working with Children and YP with PMLD**

It is argued that multidisciplinary collaboration is believed to be very important for the education of pupils with SEN, particularly for those pupils with the most severe disabilities. The SEND CoP, as highlighted above, has placed renewed emphasis on the importance of professionals working together for the interests of the CYP. Whitty and Campbell (2004) argue that educational intervention alone cannot result in social inclusion and justice but that inter-agency working may instead provide the answer. The PMLD special school setting is said to be predominantly multi-professional, with one report describing how any one child can be seen in school by up to 25 different professionals (Aires, 2000).

Strogilos, Lacey, Xanthacou & Kaila (2011) focused on the Educational context in Greece, referring to a law passed in 2000 (Law 2817/2000) which increased the number of health and social professionals working in schools. It is argued that the change in category of all health and social professionals working in schools from 'special staff' to 'special educational staff' was an important step for the inclusion of health and social professionals into the educational system and the creation of a similar 'reality'. This legislation thus placed teachers and other professionals together in some schools although it continued to be questioned how much this led to increased collaboration.

Wright and Kersner (1999) from their survey of 54 physical disability (PD) special schools across England found, on average, SLTs spent two and a half days a week working with children and their teachers, although this varied considerably. In support for previous research, the study identified that there

could be as many as 10 adults in a class at any one time. EPs however were not mentioned amongst the professionals in the classroom.

### **1.10 Purpose of the Research**

Government legislation and reports clearly acknowledge the role for EPs in working with CYP with PMLD. It is also evident that the perceived needs within the context of a PMLD school differ markedly to that of mainstream schools and indeed to a certain degree, other special schools. The existing body of research is yet to explore the perceived contribution of the EP to special schools for CYP with PMLD. This is what the current research aimed to do. This was achieved through gaining the perspectives of both EPs and PMLD special school staff via a nationwide survey, which was created specifically to explore the issues raised in previous research which has been highlighted above. This information was collated into descriptive statistics and qualitative information to provide a broad overview of the current picture of the EP contribution. It is hoped that by doing this, this study will provide a much needed insight into the current and potential contribution EPs can provide to PMLD schools and go some way to informing future EP practice.

### **1.11 Research Questions**

This is an exploratory piece of research. The research questions which drove this research are as follows:

*What is the current contribution of the Educational Psychologist to special schools which cater for children and young people with profound and multiple learning difficulties from the perspective of the Educational Psychologist?*

*What is the current contribution of the Educational Psychologist to special schools which cater for children and young people with profound and multiple learning difficulties from the perspective of special school staff?*

## **1.12 Chapter Summary**

This chapter began by presenting definitions of various important terms used within this research, in order to aid the reader's understanding (1.2). The research was then placed within a national (1.3) and local context (1.4). The different EP service delivery models were then explored (1.5) alongside the special school settings for CYP with PMLD (1.6). Legislation and its relevance to the current research was then discussed (1.7). The role of the EP (1.8) alongside other multiprofessionals working with CYP with PMLD was then explored (1.9). The chapter finished by outlining the purpose of the research (1.10) and by stating the research questions (1.11).

## **Literature Review**

### **2.1 Introduction to the Literature Review**

This chapter begins by outlining the search strategy that the author used to develop and refine the systematic literature search (2.2). This explicitly states the search terms used, in addition to the inclusion and exclusion criteria applied. Due to the restricted research and literature which has been conducted on the current contribution of EPs to special schools for children with PMLD, the broad areas which are covered in prior literature are identified and a summary provided. These have been categorised into specific subject themes for ease of the reader (2.3).

Next, specific research identified in the systematic literature review in addition to government research papers and those found through hand searching are further explored (2.4). These are again categorised to create a framework including; What are EPs currently providing to (special) schools and what do schools (and EPs) want? (2.4.1), How do other professionals currently contribute to special schools? (2.4.2), How have the views of Educational Psychologists and (special) school staff previously been gained? (2.4.3) and Discrepancies and barriers to practice (2.4.4). The context in which this research has been conducted is then considered (2.5) and Conclusions are made linking previous research to current research aims (2.6). Finally, the chapter is summarised (2.7).

## 2.2 Details of Systematic Literature Search

A systematic literature review was carried out on 11/08/2016 to identify and explore previous relevant research on the research area highlighted in the previous introductory section. It also acted to highlight the current gaps in the research and the unique contribution that this current study will add to the body of knowledge. The literature search was conducted through EBSCOHost Web. The search included 'PsycINFO', 'PsycARTICLES' and 'Education Research Complete' databases.

A variety of searches were conducted using different terminology and variation of combinations in order to try and capture as much of the relevant previous research as possible. EBSCO always search terms to be carried out using and/or functions which allows different terminologies to be included. The search was limited to 'Peer Reviewed Articles'. The search was conducted using the following search terms (please see Appendix A for a detailed description of inclusion and exclusion criteria):

*'Profound and Multiple Learning Difficult\*' OR 'Profound Intellectual Disabilit\*' OR 'Significant learning disabilit\*' OR 'Mental Retardation'*  
  
*AND 'Special School' OR 'Special Education' OR 'Specialist provision'*  
  
*AND 'Educational Psycholog\*' OR 'Psycholog\*' OR 'Support Services'*  
  
*OR 'Professional' OR 'Multidisciplinary Team'*

This resulted in N = 3,066 journal articles. Due to the large number of articles, the term 'mental retardation' was removed and a set of exclusion criteria was



applied. This included only journals written between the years 2000-2016, those which had been peer reviewed in addition to English language titles only.

This generated N = 120 journal articles. 21 were removed as duplications, resulting in N = 99 journal articles. From these results the titles and abstracts were reviewed in order to establish their relevance to the research question. It was found that none of the articles generated (N=0) related specifically to the research question.

Themes however emerged from exploring the existing research highlighted in the systematic literature review detailed above. These are still of interest to the current research as they provide information as to what areas relating to PMLD have been previously researched. A number of 89 articles were excluded as they primarily constituted literature reviews and/or were not situated within the school context and thus deemed unrelated to the current research. 13 articles were identified for further discussion from the systematic literature review in addition to 6 which were hand searched from the articles identified (See Appendix B).

These articles related to the education and wellbeing of CYP with PMLD within the school setting; all areas EPs have experience of working within. The areas identified were also guided by literature discussed in the introduction and included: the presentation of challenging behaviour, educational provision for CYP with PMLD, Special schools and staff working with CYP with PMLD and gaining the views of CYP with PMLD.

### **2.3 Summary of Previous Research Findings**

Much of the research which resulted from the search above has focused on areas such as challenging behaviour, specialist school staff, specific learning needs of children with PMLD and facilitating participation of those with PMLD, which formed the themes of the present critique of the literature. The majority of the articles discussed below have gained the perspective of school staff (both special and mainstream, or 'regular' schools as they are referred to in some research) and parents. Very few studies outside of the government papers reported later have gained the views of professionals in regards to their perspective of their contribution to special schools, particularly in relation to those catering for children and YP with PMLD.

Much of the research discussed below has been conducted outside of the United Kingdom. The cultural context and its impact on the findings and relation to practice in the UK is included in the critique.

#### **2.3.1 Challenging Behaviour and PMLD**

A considerable amount of the research found has focused on the challenging behaviour presented by children and YP with PMLD. Emerson defined challenging behaviour as 'culturally abnormal behaviour(s) of such intensity, frequency or duration that the physical safety of the person or others is likely to be placed in serious jeopardy, or behaviour which is likely to seriously limit the use of, or result in the person being denied access to, ordinary community facilities' (Emerson, 1995 cited in Emerson, 2001). It is said to include self-

injurious behaviour, stereotypical behaviour and aggressive/destructive behaviour (Poppes, van der Putten & Vlaskamp, 2014).

It is argued that challenging behaviour is very common in those with profound and intellectual multiple disabilities (PIMD) (Poppes, Van der Putten & Vlaskamp, 2010). Those with PIMD are said to be more likely to suffer from health difficulties such as seizures and pain due to issues such as constipation and respiratory problems and an increased difficulty in communicating wants and needs is said to confound these issues (Matson, Dixon & Matson, 2005; Watt-Smith, 2009 as cited in Poppes et al., 2010). It is said that these conditions are often related with the manifestation of challenging behaviours (op. cit.).

Broomhead (2013) explored the perceptions of both parents and teachers regarding differential treatment or stigma experienced by pupil with challenging behaviour. This study included children with a variety of needs, including PMLD. Semi-structured interviews were carried out with 10 parents of children with challenging behaviour in addition to 15 educational practitioners employed in both mainstream and behavioural, emotional and social difficulties (BESD) schools. Difficulties in managing challenging behaviour in mainstream schools, lack of time for teachers to explore underlying causes of the behaviour and lack of training in this area are highlighted.

The study reported that three children of parents interviewed were receiving support on School Action Plus, 'receiving support from external services such as Educational Psychology' (p5) although EP involvement is not verified in the study. Data was collected via semi structured interviews with parents and via post with 15 educational professionals in a variety of positions; seven in

mainstream and eight in a special school for pupils with BESD. From the interviews, two avenues of thought were highlighted regarding 'unwanted' or 'preferential' treatment perceived by parents and/or professionals to be experienced by pupils with challenging behaviour.

The study does not specifically report on those students with PMLD and how this relates to their experience in both mainstream and special schools. When further, in-depth information is included in the study, they were related to children with a specific need of BESD, and consequently little information can be taken from it for the purpose of the current research.

Other studies have focused more specifically on challenging behaviour related to children and YP with PMLD. Poppes et al., 2014 explored how challenging behaviour is addressed in daily practice in 6 residential care facilities in the Netherlands. They used a stratified sample of 30 people selected from an existing database of 181 children and adults with PIMD on the basis of those with 'the most severe and frequently reported challenging behaviours' (p128).

It was reported that all direct staff had access to healthcare psychologists in all facilities and used Individual Plans (IPs) drawn up by the direct staff under the responsibility of the healthcare psychologist. It was found that this sample group presented challenging behaviour on an hourly or daily basis. Despite this, it was found that 48.2% of the challenging behaviours observed by staff who worked directly with those with PIMD was not noted in these IPs. It was also reported that the nature of the information recorded was not specific which in turn could affect the nature, and quality and support provided. Lack of staff knowledge or considering challenging behaviour 'a given' was suggested for why challenging

behaviour was reported in this manner (p134). The results present implications for understanding the root cause of the behaviour presented in those with PIMD and the importance of record keeping in informing future practice and the type of support required for individuals. The sample size here was relatively small (n=30) affecting the external validity of the findings. The sample was also purposefully chosen to represent those demonstrating the highest prevalence, frequency and perceived severity of challenging behaviour.

### **2.3.2 Curriculum/Education Provided for CYP with PMLD**

Many papers have written about the need for a distinctive, tailored curriculum for CYP with PMLD (Byers, 1999; Male & Rayner, 2007). Head teachers of special schools catering for PMLD noted that this pupil population presented particular challenges in terms of providing a broad, balanced and relevant curriculum (Male & Rayner, 2007 as cited in DfE, 2013). Furthermore, Byers (1999) noted that EPs have a role in enabling mainstream schools to have the skills and confidence to adapt and deliver the curriculum in an effective way.

Goss (2006) argued that teaching and learning for pupils with severe and multiple learning difficulties could be enriched by a closer focus on the CYP emotional factors in addition to carefully identifying what is meaningful to them. He refers to this as 'meaning-led' learning. Goss' research represents a small – scale piece of qualitative research which attempts to bring together psychotherapy and special educational needs. Five in-depth interviews with parents of CYP with PMLD (n = 3) or SLD (n = 2) aged between 7- 17 years were conducted. Here, parents informed the researcher how their child learns, responds and what is meaningful to them and ways in which their learning could

be enhanced. Interestingly, the participants were selected by teachers in two schools on the basis of who they felt 'would be best placed, and most willing to share the kind of information and insights required for the study' (op. cit. p214) and this is important to bear in mind when considering the results of this study. The subjective nature of the responses is acknowledged by the researcher.

The interviews were semi-structured and contained open questions. Themes were identified as to how their parents felt their child best learned and included Intensive Interaction, sensory cues and adults modelling and shared role-playing, if interested. The researcher argues that 'we can underestimate the value of perspectives of the people who know a pupil best' (p216).

Consequently, the author suggests a 'meaning audit' for pupils which can be carried out and incorporated into schools planning cycles whilst acknowledged that pupil profiles are an established component of teacher planning.

A framework for collecting such 'meaningful information' which is said to be two fold is proposed; from a 'human circle' or those who work or come into contact with the CYP on a regular basis and is likely to involve family, school staff and carers and then the 'material circle' which holds information from the human circle plus information from professionals. Questions are then posed to these two groups by the class teacher of the CYP through interviews and the data analysed. In reference to the analysis, it is stated that lists will be drawn up looking at commonalities and patterns. A systematic process for analysis is not specified or guidelines provided within this research and thus gives room for the use of different methodologies and subjective interpretation.

Whilst it is acknowledged that this research is small scale and provides just one example of the use of the proposed 'meaning audit' from the authors own teaching practice, it represents an interesting piece of research in the current context of placing the CYP and parents at the centre of decision making.

Lawson, Waite and Robertson (2005) explored the distinctiveness of curriculum provision provided for CYP with learning difficulties at 14-16 years (Key Stage 4) in the context of opportunities and challenges. A questionnaire was sent via post to Key Stage 4 co-ordinators in 413 settings for CYP with severe and profound and multiple learning difficulties. Attempts to identify those in mainstream-based provision proved difficult, due in part to difficulties in identifying students 'labelled' as having severe or profound multiple learning difficulties (p13). In total, 125 responses were received. Furthermore, three meetings were held which involved different professionals such as teachers, connexions advisers and LEA officers to discuss the curriculum for Key Stage 4. Case study visits were also carried out to four special schools and two mainstream schools catering for students with learning difficulties and discussions with Key Stage 4 coordinators and other Key Stage 4 staff took place, where possible. This mixed methods approach is a clear strength in this research.

Quantitative analysis of the data collected from the questionnaires took place using coding categories derived from two researchers reading the comments. What methodology underlined this analysis and if the researchers shared and agreed the same categories for the data is not discussed. The process of developing the questionnaire is also not highlighted. Following analysis of the questionnaires, over  $\frac{3}{4}$  of respondents mentioned specific aims for Key Stage 4,

including achievement of accreditation, preparation for post-16 and development of life skills and independence. Differences to Key Stage 3 highlighted by respondents included increased choice and autonomy. Whether the school catered for students up until 19 or if students left at 16 influenced whether the students were prepared for the next phase in the same setting or prepared for moving on.

Whilst this research only focused on Key Stage 4, and is therefore restrictive in its implication for other ages and stages of the curriculum, it highlights the distinctive curriculum provision which is required for students with PMLD.

### **2.3.3 Special Schools and Staff Working for Children and YP with PMLD**

Simmons and Bayliss (2007) highlighted the continued challenges and controversies related to the education of young people with PMLD. They conducted research into how children with PMLD could be 'included' in general classroom life in a special school designated for children with Severe Learning Difficulties (SLD). They used an interpretivist methodology and a grounded, ethnographic approach. Participant and non-participant observation was employed in addition to informal and formal semi-structured interviews.

Based on 8 weeks of observations, in which the researchers acted as Learning Support Assistants (LSAs), it was concluded that 'school staff lacked sufficient understanding of PMLD stemming from few opportunities for additional training resulting in inappropriate educational experiences' (p21). The strengths of this study included the opportunity to gain the individual views of the staff within the school setting. Nearly all staff highlighted that they lacked confidence in working



with children with PMLD and believed they required additional training. It is important to note however that this research is reflective of only one specialist provision. It therefore cannot be generalised to all specialist settings who cater for PMLD and SLD students. Furthermore, many special schools now have specialist provision within their school for children with PMLD so their unique needs can be met.

In another qualitative piece of research, Ashdown and Darlington (2007) reported on the progress and outcomes of a special school reorganisation in one LA, focusing specifically on the implications of this for the education of children with PMLD. Here, the importance of co-operative teams and partnerships with professionals from different disciplines in addition to parents was emphasised. It is important to note that one of the researchers was employed by one of the special schools reported on in the paper. Consultations with parents took place, who shared concerns about the vulnerability of PMLD students when 'mixed' with SLD and MLD students. Parents also were reported to have expressed concern over potential lack of specialist staff as well as specialist resources. It is not reported however how many parents were consulted and by whom, the structure the consultations took and how the consultations were recorded. Furthermore, this report again only focuses on one local authority so again there is an issue of generalisation of the findings often associated with qualitative studies.

Richard Crombie, an EP, undertook research based within a special school for children and young people with both SLD and PMLD aged 2 – 19 years using case-study methodology. 15 observations were undertaken with the aim at uncovering 'unconscious and unnoticed professional practice'. Data was

collected via observations (including both Narrative and Engagement Profiles) which were primarily focused at staff behaviours. Subsequent characterisation of practice included sensitivity to needs, affirmation of children's own achievements, sharing the experiences with the CYP, total engagement with the CYP in the activities and sensitivity to the CYPs preferences. Empathy was said to be at the heart of this practice, relating this to both relationships and communication with the CYP. This was reiterated through consultations conducted with the parents of CYP who attended the school. Whilst case study methodology is effective in investigating real world complex issues, it is argued that findings from case studies cannot necessarily be applied beyond the specific context studied. (Crombie, Sullivan, Walker & Warnock, 2014).

Jones (2005) paper resulted from a four-year project with 14 teachers of pupils with PMLD. The researcher used questionnaires and individual and group interviews as a method of data collection. Teachers completed questionnaires related to their professional experience and were interviewed about their training, professional development and personal experience of working with disabilities. Finally, the teachers were put into groups to talk about the 'nature of PMLD' with a focus of the group interview being provided in the form of a video of 3 pupils with PMLD who presented as very different learners (Jones, 2005).

The authors report that the teachers presented similar views about their perceived understanding of PMLD; that is, a group of pupils with complex and multiple learning difficulties who although sharing common characteristics, were individual and unique. The basis of the pupils difficulties were discussed, such as neurological damage, their developmental issues and the prevalence of

multi-sensory impairment, said to compound the difficulties experienced by the child.

When reviewing this study, it is pertinent to consider methodological factors and potential drawbacks which influenced the results collected. It is suggested that the interview format, which was open-ended, may have resulted in the teachers experiencing difficulty at first at talking about how they viewed their PMLD students. The author themselves highlights the possibility that the research design may have influenced the data provided by the teachers interviewed; *'Strengths and attributes of the pupils were not apparent in the data, but this could indeed be a reflection of the limiting impact of the research design'* (p383)

The impact of the research design on the resulting data is an important lesson to bear in mind in this current research. The author also reflects on their influence as the researcher on the questions asked, something which is included in the 'researcher's position' in the current study.

Martin & Alborz (2014) conducted a qualitative study at a special school in England, exploring the views of 17 teaching assistants (TAs) and 5 teachers on the extent to which teaching assistant training had equipped them to support students with complex learning needs. The study took place in a non-maintained special school for pupils with PIMD with limited or no verbal abilities. 23 staff members volunteered to be part of the study, 17 of which were teaching assistants. These participants were self-selected but 'the researcher was sufficiently familiar with the staff to know the participants were representative of the staff as a whole' (p313). This is an interesting comment in itself as it highlights the potential position of the researcher in the research.

One-to-one semi structured interviews were conducted with nine staff and 14 staff completed questionnaires. How the participants were assigned to each method of data collection however is not stated. It was found that the senior management placed emphasis on education and training of their staff, which included in-service training and an induction period. TAs commented on the difficulty of finding appropriate external training opportunities. TAs also reported requiring more in-depth training on communication tools and strategies, given the complex needs of the students. It was found that whilst the expectation was that this would be provided by the class teacher, this did not routinely happen. Further to this, training on managing challenging behaviour was found to focus on behavioural interventions rather than in-depth education about what underpins the emergence of behaviour in CYP with PIMD. It was reported that knowledge sharing amongst staff tended to be informal and there was not a culture of 'seeking out expertise' (p318). Whilst this study only took place in one special school, it does provide some interesting information regarding the training and experiences of teaching assistants working with CYP with PIMD.

#### **2.3.4 Gaining the Views and Including CYP with PMLD**

The SEND CoP has acted to emphasise the importance of the voice of the child or young person, enabled through pupil participation. When considering gaining the voice of CYP with PMLD, this can be seen especially important; 'Children and young people everywhere – across all regions and sections of society – want their views, experiences and suggestions listened to. It remains true that the hardest voices to reach are the ones that we most need to hear.' (Learning to Listen, DfES, 2001, p.3 as cited in Harding, 2009, p117). There is said to be

both a pragmatic and moral motive for pupil's views to be heard with children having both a lot of information to contribute themselves as well as the right to be heard (Gersch, 1996 as cited in Harding, 2009).

Hayes (2004) makes reference to visual annual reviews developed by EPs in Nottingham City alongside a special school for children with SLD. Hayes' study evaluated the effectiveness of the method used, which involved preparing the pupil before the review and running the review itself. The pupil's answers were prepared for the meeting using forms of communication accessible to them. The EP facilitated this by providing the TA who supported the CYP with a list on likes/dislikes, what they felt they were good at or needed to work on at home or school, questions around their learning in addition to friendships, independence and inclusion.

The evaluation of this method was based on a review of one Year 6 pupil with moderate learning difficulties (MLD). Adult participants were asked to record the perception of how effective it was via a structured questionnaire. The pupil was also able to give feedback through the use of visual symbols. It was found that all adults rated the form of review as very good, commenting that it was more child centred and involved the young person more than other methods of review. These 'other' methods of review are however not named. It would be interesting to know what additional experience of annual reviews those adults in this meeting had and were drawing on in order to compare. Moreover, the TA, LEA support teacher and mother felt that there was no difference in the amount of their input compared with other reviews.

Hayes acknowledges that broad conclusions cannot be made based on one evaluation. This evaluation also involved a child with MLD not PMLD. It is noted that one mainstream school used a pupil's classmate to answer for him. How representative this is of the pupil with PMLD's views however is debatable and what understanding this child had of the pupil's communication is vital if this methodology is to be employed. The author suggests the use of tactile and visual cues for these young people. How this would be facilitated and the impact of this with CYP with PMLD would be of further interest to this current research.

Porter, Ouvry, Morgan and Downs (2001) presented a paper around some of the issues which are involved in interpreting communication with people with PMLD. Through the use of a case study of a 14 year old boy, Peter, the importance of both inference and intention are highlighted as playing an important role in communication and the dangers which can arise when communication is misunderstood. One of the strengths of this study is that the authors interviewed several people involved in Peter's life, from his parents and siblings to teacher, escort and SLT. It was acknowledged that they provided important information on how to communicate with Peter and the responses made in return.

It was found that similarities and differences existed in the ways in which people around Peter communicated with him and he communicated with them. The importance of sensitising oneself to a range of responses and checking responses are accurate and continue to have the same meaning was highlighted.

## **2.4 Previous Research Capturing the Contribution of EPs to (special) schools and the Views of Professionals**

As discussed previously, the results from the systematic literature search detailed above indicates that research into the contribution of EPs to special schools catering for CYP with PMLD does not currently exist. The systematic literature review highlighted no articles relating to research articles detailing the current contribution of the EP to special schools catering for CYP with PMLD.

It is still of interest however to the current research how previous research has been successful in capturing the perspective of EPs and special school staff. As such, a hand search of the references in the articles highlighted above in addition to the use of search engines, such as Google and Bing, were used to access further articles.

The articles selected here for discussion have been chosen because they provide some interesting information related to research methodology used to gain the views of both professionals and school staff in addition to what EPs and schools believe they are currently providing (or receiving) in terms of service. They include articles and government papers published over the past 16 years in relation to special educational needs and disability in addition to research carried out into the role and contribution of the EP to both mainstream and special school settings.

The areas have been divided up to provide a framework for discussion below and includes the following topics:

- How have the views of Educational Psychologists and (special) school staff, in relation to the contribution of EPs, previously been gained?
- What are EPs and other Support Services Currently Providing to (special) Schools?
- Discrepancies and Barriers to Practice

#### **2.4.1 How have the views of Educational Psychologists and (Special) school staff, in relation to the contribution of EPs, previously been gained?**

Previous research has looked at the perception held by teachers and other school staff of EPs. In the US, Gilman and Gabriel (2004) conducted a pilot study on 1,710 educational professionals (teachers and administrators) and school psychologists from four states. They aimed to assess knowledge, satisfaction and perceived helpfulness of the school psychology services and perceptions related to current and desired role and functions of school psychologists. Each completed the School Psychology Perceptions Survey, described as 'a comprehensive questionnaire that is designed to assess a number of dimensions related to school psychology practice' (Gillman & Medway, 2007, p149). A separate form of the instrument was constructed for each group, containing the same items but with slightly modified wording to reflect each group.

It was found that one third of teachers and administrators wanted school psychologists to participate in more assessment activities, with only 11% of school psychologists wanting this. Moreover, nearly two thirds of teachers



wanted school psychologists to be more involved in teacher consultation compared to only 41% of school psychologists. Both teachers and school psychologists reported a desire for school psychologists to be involved in more group counselling and with children in 'regular education'.

The authors highlight that due to the limitations of the study, it should be considered a pilot study. Despite an overall large sample size, there was a significantly smaller number of school psychologists ( $n = 87$ ) compared to teachers and administrators ( $n = 1419$ ). Furthermore, they acknowledge that they did not attempt to stratify the sample. The need for additional samples to support the findings, given the non-normal distributions of responses across locations is noted by the researchers.

Gilman & Medway (2007) drew data from the School Psychology Perceptions Survey (SPPS; Gilman & Gabriel, 2004) focusing on the perceptions of school psychologists held by regular and special education teachers. This therefore allowed specific consideration to be given to those in specialist education settings. Many of the items in the SPPS contained Likert-style rating options and related to areas such as perceived knowledge of school psychology, perceived helpfulness, and helpfulness of the report's recommendations amongst others. Furthermore, participants were asked to rate how often they requested school psychologists to provide varying functions such as consultations, assessment of learning disability, in-service training and curriculum development. This second area, whilst providing insight into what teacher's perception is of the contribution of EPs, also provided an indication of the actual contribution of the EP to the school setting; i.e. what they are currently providing as opposed to their perception of the EP.

Special education teachers reported greater contact with school psychologists and that the recommendations given in the school psychologist's reports was important to their own educational practice. It was found however that, regardless of specialty, 'important school psychology roles remain largely ignored' with a preference for requesting assessment over input on curriculum development and individual or group counselling from school psychologists (op. cit. p57). The context of this research is important however as teachers were asked to rate their perceptions of school psychologists roles vs school counsellor roles which may have influenced their view on who provided such services.

It is important to note that there was a much larger number of 'regular education' teachers ( $n = 1,297$ ) compared to special education teachers (211). Additionally, 92% of school psychologists volunteered to collect the data from their schools, sometimes distributing the survey themselves in the absence of trained assistants. As such, this may subsequently have inadvertently affected the data collection. This study sample was taken primarily from the South-eastern region of the US and given the known variation in practice (as highlighted by the authors) it may not be representative of the US as a whole. Moreover, the psychometric analysis the authors chose to carry out was limited due to the survey containing single items, as opposed to multiple items for each dimension.

Boyle & MacKay (2007) carried out a follow-up cross-sectional survey of the involvement of EPs in pupil support in mainstream primary and secondary schools using questionnaires used in a study 10 years previously. Through this,

they explored the perception of head teachers and/or principal teachers from 91 primary and 21 secondary schools in relation the EPs current level of involvement in their school; this included specific roles including the assessment of individual pupils, work with parents, in-service staff training amongst others. The questionnaires consisted of five point likert scales (1 = very much, 5 = not involved) and were posted and completed anonymously.

One clear strength of this study is the follow up of a previous study (MacKay & Boyle, 1994) which allowed for 'illumination of patterns of systemic change in service delivery over a long-term period...or evidence of changing user perceptions of services' (Boyle and MacKay, 2007 p25). Here, it was found that EPs were considered an integral part of the schools pupil support strategy. A multiple regression analysis of the data showed this to be the only significant predictor of perceived value of service delivery in regard to pupil support. The other eight areas, including individual counselling of pupils with learning difficulties and advice on teaching approaches were found to be non-significant predictors. Instead it is concluded that schools continue to want 'more of everything', with higher levels of user satisfaction when the service delivery ranged from work with individual to school and families.

Due to the nature of the research, the results from primary and secondary were combined and given the significantly larger number of primary schools (ratio of 4:1) it is likely that these would be more reflective of primary schools. This therefore did not allow for exploration of differences between the two sectors which could have had implication for practice. Furthermore, whilst views in this study were given on psychologists from four different psychological services, the study itself took place in one region within Scotland, impacting its

generalisation across Scotland or the rest of the UK. Finally, this study was specifically focussed on the role of the EP in relation to pupil support of those with learning difficulties. Subsequently, the further role of the EP in whole school learning, mental health initiatives was not explored.

Farrell et al (2006) carried out a wide scale study to obtain the views of EP work from a wide variety of stakeholders using various methodologies. They employed both a quantitative and qualitative approach using interviews, on site visits and questionnaires. Of particular interest here to this current research, questionnaires were sent to EPs, PEPs as well as schools including special schools. The research included three versions of the main questions, including one for EPs and one for staff working in schools. The other version was for all other professionals who work with EPs. In this study, the number of EP responses was 276 out of 900 and 101 out of 214 PEPs. Furthermore, 120 out of 600 special schools targeted returned the questionnaire.

One of the areas covered in the questionnaire involved asking for examples of SEN work carried out by EPs which demonstrated their distinctive contribution. It is important to note that this was placed in the context of distinctive practice that had the potential to have a high or very high impact on the five Every Child Matters outcomes (DfES, 2004). 66% of special schools provided examples related to individual child work. This was in comparison to 42% of EPs and 30% of PEPs. 20% of the examples given by EPs related to training in comparison to only 7% of special schools and interestingly, only 6% of PEPs. Special school and EPs provided similar proportion of examples however relating to consultations (20% special schools; 25% EPs) where PEPs provided the highest number of examples in this area at 42%.

This provides an interesting question as to the differing responses depending on the position of the EP within the service. Furthermore, as the report highlights it is not possible from the responses to determine what form the individual work took. For example, it is noted that approximately a quarter of teachers from all types of schools referred to 'assessment' but less than 1 in 10 used the words 'statutory assessment'. When considering the reports from EPs and schools, it is interesting to note that PEPs and EPs gave examples of training and consultancy work. This was however scarcely mentioned by schools. Again, the context of this research is important. This may be due to schools viewing this as less 'distinctive' and less likely to impact on assisting children meet the ECM five outcomes.

Strogilos et al. (2011) adopted a multiple case-study design aimed at understanding collaboration and integration of services and the effectiveness of these amongst pupils with PMLD in Greece, including EPs. Case studies were chosen in five special schools and included 10 pupils and their parents. The researchers reviewed legislation, used diaries and participant observation and semi structured interviews to collect data. The sample included those located in institutional and recovery centres, which belong to the Ministry of Health and Social Care. In contrast to this, all the special schools belong to the Ministry of Education. The sample was therefore purposeful as they wished to seek groups where some of the features/processes they were interested in were more likely to occur. Furthermore, all five schools were selected from Athens, the capital of Greece.

As part of their data collection, two members of the research team visited each school for 1-2 days and tried to develop intimate and informal relationships with

all the professionals working with the child. Documents relating to the child were also collected although this information was not formally recorded but used to aid 'understanding of each case study'. The researchers conducted interviews after carrying out observations and this information was used to inform the questions. This resulted therefore in slightly different questions. It is argued that the researchers were interested in the respondent's external reality (e.g. facts and events) as well as their internal experience (feelings and meanings).

It was found that irrespective of the amount of collaboration between teachers, other professionals and parents, there was a shared positive attitude towards joint working practices. When this was explored further however, through questioning whether they felt they were 'working as a team' (p806), it is reported that most negative answers were given. It was noted that schools functioning under the first model, where the external professionals are based outside of the school, was stated that; *'It was almost impossible to maintain even minimum contact between all the people working with the same child'* (p807)

The researchers note that in nearly all of the schools, time was the most significant hurdle to collaborative working. It was also reported that there was a tendency by professionals to work in pairs with teachers rather than a team. Additionally, professionals only appeared to collaborate when there was a problem. Finally, the researchers noted that although the professionals in the second model are situated within the school, there appeared to be little difference in practice to those in the first model who were situated externally.

Out of the 49 people interviewed, only three included psychologists. The psychologists, along with other professionals, including 10 teachers and 7

SLTs, were asked questions in interviews which focused on collaborative working with other professionals when undertaking their work within the special schools or institutions. Thus their current contribution was explored within the parameters of the areas provided by the researchers which may impact on the content and richness of the data collected.

## **2.4.2 What are EPs and other Support Services Currently Providing to (special) Schools in England?**

### **2.4.2.1 Training**

Farrell et al (2006) noted from their questionnaire that EPs gave a variety of examples of activities where they were involved in planning and/or providing training on SEN issues to staff in schools. The responses they received (or that are reported in this research) focused on the area of social, emotional and mental health, behaviour management, social stories and social and emotional development.

Kelly and Gray (DfEE, 2000) found from their questionnaire that over 80% of all types of schools received less than one hour of training or none at all from the EPS during April 1998-March 1999. In spite of these, approximately 50% of schools stated that they would like this service going forward. It is particularly noted that special schools wanted more in-service training with priorities including behaviour management and counselling, developing teachers' skills, and training staff to deal with children with more complex special needs (DfE, 2000).

#### **2.4.2.2 Consultation**

When considering EPs involvement in general consultation on SEN issues related to working with staff on improving services and provision in the school, special school staff noted consultations focusing on behaviour management strategies for children with emotional needs, managing challenging behaviour with children with complex difficulties such as ASD and 'help on teaching phonics to our diverse population' (Farrell et al, 2006).

#### **2.4.2.3 Multi-agency Work**

EPs are known to work in a multidisciplinary way and some believe this to be one of the distinct contributions they provide (Dunsmuir & Leadbetter, 2010). The Educational psychology services (England): current role, good practice and future directions: the research report (Kelly & Gray, 2000) identified that over 80% of schools surveyed wanted and receive EPs contribution to multi-agency planning and reviews with school staff. Further information gathered from case study interviews found however that this multi-agency working only tends to take place in schools in extreme cases. Where it is possible however, such as regular school-based multi-agency planning meetings, schools recorded finding these highly valuable and an integral part of the work carried out by EPSs. Again, it is important to be mindful that this is the responses of secondary, primary and special schools combined.



#### **2.4.2.4 Other Support Services**

Wright and Kersner (1999) conducted a survey of 83 special schools in England catering for children aged 5 – 16 who have physical disabilities (PD). The survey was distributed via post to each school, aimed at both teachers and SLTs. 62 questionnaires from teachers and 47 from SLTs were used in the analysis from 54 special schools. SLTs were asked questions such as 'how much time do you spend in school each week'. On average, they spent two and a half days a week working with children and their teachers, although the range was from half a day (equivalent to one session) per week to a full-time commitment (ten sessions). Teachers and therapists were then asked questions regarding collaborative working, such as 'are there any factors which make working together difficult?' The most popular responses were time constraints along with limited time of the SLT in the school. Other qualitative answers included clarity of role and personality differences.

Interestingly, the study identified that there could be as many as 10 adults in a class at any one time. This included; SLTs (and assistants), physiotherapists (and aides), OTs (and aides), nurses, a variety of non-teaching assistants, educational support, other specialist teachers amongst others. EPs were not mentioned amongst the professionals in the classroom. This could be due to the limited amount of time they spent within the school and/or classroom or due to work by the EP being carried out outside of the classroom as this was also suggested as a reason for why not all teachers mentioned a SLT as an adult within their classroom.

Again, it is important to note that this research took place with CYP with PD as opposed to PMLD. Furthermore, whilst the quantitative data was analysed using descriptive statistics, it is not shared how the qualitative information was analysed. Additionally, it is reported that some questionnaires received 'did not meet the selection criteria' but what this criteria was is not explicitly stated. Finally, the article only reports on ten of the 26 questions covered. The reasons for this and how the other data was used is not shared by the authors.

Male and Rayner (2007) conducted a survey via postal questionnaire of 321 SLD schools in England, receiving a total of 167 responses. They focused on aspects of policy and provision for pupils with PMLD who attend special schools in England. As part of the research, Head teachers were asked whether or not they received input from various support services and if so, how many hours they received. There was a considerable variation in the number of support hours received by schools. The most marked was for Occupational Therapy which varied between a few hours a term to the equivalent of full time support. Interestingly, the three top services received included Physiotherapy (n = 153) Speech and language therapy (n = 152) and Educational psychology (n = 130). Social workers (n= 39) and clinical psychologists (n = 23) represented the least recorded services received. When it came to reporting the mean number of hours of input however, EPs provided the least number of hours at an average of 8.7 hours per term. This was in comparison to physiotherapy which provided 4.8 hours a week. Social workers were reported as providing 14.3 hours per term. This demonstrates that although EPs were more prevalent in the schools compared to other services, the amount of hours of support the school received was actually the lowest of all the support services.

### **2.4.3 Discrepancies and Potential Barriers to Practice**

Kelly & Gray (2000) conducted research with LEA EPSs in addition to schools (including 68 special schools) within England. The aim was to determine the current scope and work of EPSs, identify barriers effecting a change in the balance of EP work and to explore the view on future priorities and directions (DfEE, 2000). It is important to recognise that this research took place 16 years ago and is therefore not representative of EPs working practices in light of the SEND reforms introduced in September 2014 (Department for Education and Department of Health, 2014).

In their research, it was noted that EPSs reported providing a wider range of services to schools than schools reported receiving. For example, most EPSs reported providing advice to schools before pupils with SEN were admitted. It was reported however that 75% of schools said they did not receive this service and of those who did, 40% were special schools compared to 10% of primary schools and 50% of secondary schools. Whilst the research included responses from 68 special schools, it does not break down the research into secondary, primary and special school responses, so it is not possible to know the specific views of special schools from this research. This research also focused on LEA EPs and did not include EPs in private practice.

Due to the high number of professionals involved with CYP with PMLD, this raises the question about what contribution the EP can provide to the CYP which is distinctive or 'value added'. Farrell et al. (2006) report from their questionnaire that EPs and PEPs recognised that there were many instances in

which another professional could possibly carry out the same work with the same impact (42% of EPs and 60% of PEPs). In comparison to this, special schools suggest that in only 19% of the cases, the EP was needed. They indicated that the work could often be carried out by another professional, citing clinical psychologists (33%), CAMHS staff (23%), specialist teacher (35%) and SENCo (30%). EPs themselves were most likely to highlight the work being able to be carried out by a clinical psychologist (17%). Again, it is important to note that this is in relation to the examples given in the questionnaire. As such the answers may invariably have been different if the examples had been of a different nature. Overall, special schools were reported as citing distinctive contribution of EPs within SEN work.

## **2.5 Considering the Contexts of Research**

The profession of EPs is said to be particularly diverse; differing between countries, within countries and even within services and at the level of the EP (Lunt & Majors, 2000). Despite this, research has managed to capture EPs views on their role and their contribution to SEN (Farrell et al, 2006) A number of points are worth bearing in mind when considering the specific geographical context of the non-UK studies critiqued and are detailed below.

Strogilos et al (2011) undertook their research in Greece where pupils with severe PMLD are almost exclusively educated in special education schools. Unlike in England where external professionals such as psychologists and therapists are routinely employed by schools to provide services to their students in mainstream schools, social and health professionals are employed only in special schools in Greece.

Gillman and Gabriel (2004) and Gilman and Medway (2007) studies were based in the United States and inevitably there are different ways in which EPs work in the UK and the US. Whilst the context of these studies restricts how transferable and generalisable these findings are, the approach and methodology used are still of value and interest.

## **2.6 Conclusions Linking Previous Research to Current Research Aims**

As demonstrated in the research discussed, there has been a limited amount of research in relation to both the contribution of EPs to special schools, from the perspective of the EP and special school staff. None have specifically focused on the contribution of the EP to specific special schools which cater for children and young people with profound and multiple learning difficulties.

The current research represents the attempt to fill this gap in the current literature. The research highlighted above, particularly that carried out by Farrell et al (2006) and Kelly and Gray (DfEE, 2000) has emphasised a discrepancy between the contribution which is reported by EPs and special school staff. In an attempt to get a full, coherent picture therefore, the current research will ask both of these groups of professionals.

The previous research which has been presented demonstrates methods through which perceptions of these target groups have been captured.

Questionnaires and surveys have been shown to provide quantitative information and where possible, it has been supplemented by qualitative information gained through on site visits and in depth case studies. The current research attempted to gain primarily quantitative information through the use of

carefully chosen questions within a survey in addition to the opportunity for participants to provide, and thus the research to capture, qualitative information through open questions. These open questions will then be analysed using content analysis.

## **2.7 Chapter Summary**

In summary, in order to fill the gaps identified in the literature, the current study used a mixed method design which addressed the following research questions:

*What is the current contribution of the Educational Psychologist to special schools which cater for children and young people with profound and multiple learning difficulties from the perspective of the Educational Psychologist?*

*What is the current contribution of the Educational Psychologist to special schools which cater for children and young people with profound and multiple learning difficulties from the perspective of special school staff?*

Having identified the current national and local context and the research literature available, the following chapter will proceed further into exploring the methodology used for the current study.

## **Methodology and Exploratory Research Process**

### **3.1 Introduction to the Current Chapter**

This chapter begins by stating the ontological and epistemological assumptions made in this research (3.2). This includes an introduction to research paradigms, critical realism and the researcher's position (3.2.1, 3.2.2 & 3.2.3). The exploratory research process will be explained (3.3) followed by the research technique (3.4) and design (3.5). Following this, the development of the research tool used is explored (3.6) via the use of an expert jury and participation validation group (3.6.1). Next, the data collection and analysis process is made explicit through the use of a flow diagram (3.7). How participants were identified and sampled is explained (3.7.1) alongside further details into the data collection process (3.7.2).

The data analysis process is then outlined (3.7.3) which included the use of descriptive statistics and content analysis (3.7.4) and how this has been utilised in the current research (3.7.5). Finally, the various components of ethical considerations are stated (3.8). This includes maintaining ethical standards (3.8.1) and validity and reliability (3.8.2) alongside informed consent (3.8.3), right to withdraw (3.8.4) anonymity risk (3.8.5) and data protection (3.8.6). Finally, the relevance and impact of the current research is explored (3.9). The chapter ends by providing a summary of the chapter.

## **3.2 Ontological and Epistemological Assumptions**

### **3.2.1 Research Paradigms**

It is recognised that there are different ways of viewing social reality and how to gain knowledge regarding this social reality (Bracken, 2010). Researchers thus adopt different philosophical positions and practice methodology is subsequently said to be an expression of a commitment to a particular view of reality - ontology, and to ways of knowing the world - an epistemology (Usher et al, 1997 as cited in Moore, 2005). Researchers have a duty to be fully aware of the ontological and epistemological basis of their practice as this has important implications for how practice is understood (Moore, 2005). By being transparent in research, this in turn allows those who read research to understand the underlying ontological and epistemological assumptions of the research and how these influence the choice of methodology and methods (Scotland, 2012).

### **3.2.2 Critical Realism**

The epistemological and ontological perspective in this piece of research is addressed below. This is with the purpose of allowing those who read the research to understand the underlying ontological and epistemological assumptions and the influence these have on the subsequent choice of methodology and methods (Scotland, 2012).

The current research is reflective of a post positivist critical realism perspective. This is particularly appropriate for research in practice and value-based professions (Robson, 2002). Critical realists believe that there is a reality to



which reference can be made, and multiple perceptions about a single mind-independent reality exist (Robson, 2002; Healy & Perry, 2000 as cited in Bisman, 2010). In relation to the current research, the perceived contribution of the EP to special schools for CYP with PMLD is a reality which is shared by EPs and professionals working in these settings, though this reality is experienced and perceived individually. Thus the participants experience their own reality to this phenomena.

This research accepts the view that it is not possible to gather a single, correct understanding of the world or 'God's eye view' (Putnam, as cited in Maxwell, 2012). Thus the data gathered and accessed may not indeed provide direct access to this reality but uncover what it is possible to know (Willig, 2008; Moore, 2005). The aim therefore is to gain the probabilistic truth as opposed to the absolute truth as our knowledge of the world is mediated by the discourse available (Bisman, 2010; Sayer, 2004 as cited in McEvoy & Richards, 2006).

Any attempt to describe and 'know' the world is fallible due to the constantly evolving and emerging nature of the social world (Scott, 2005). This can be true of the context in which EPs work, which has seen significant changes over the past several decades. This research situates the view of reality in an historical context, in recognition that knowledge is a social and historical product which can be specific to the particular time, culture or situation which subsequently inform the ways of exploring research (Robson, 2002; Bracken, 2010). Thus it is recognised that the reality of the perceived contribution of the EPs is bound by the time in which it is experienced by the EP or special school staff in their specific contexts. These contexts are also explored in order to add further to the understanding of the impact of the culture of these contexts on the perceptions.

Whilst this raises queries regarding knowledge and the ability to make claims based on it, it is explicitly acknowledged throughout the research and highlighted that this is the perception of the group of professionals at one point in time (Moore, 2005). When considering the generation of knowledge, critical realists believe that enduring structures and processes can provide a point of reference by which theories can be tested and allow progress in understanding (McEvoy & Richards, 2006). The aim of the research here therefore is to uncover these structures or underlying mechanisms that give rise to actions and events experienced in the empirical domain (Wollin, 1996 as cited in Bisman, 2010). Subsequently, through the exploration of the perceptions of the contribution of the EP to PMLD special schools, from the unique viewpoint of both the EPs and special school staff, the aim in this current research is to highlight areas (which could be considered mechanisms) which give rise to the perceptions and experiences of both these groups of professionals. As the researcher, one seeks to understand the mechanisms at work and the contexts in which they operate which in turn will allow the question of not 'what will produce the greatest overall change' but instead, 'what works best, for whom and under what circumstances?' (Robson, 2002. p39).

The ultimate goal of research from a critical realist paradigm, as is the overarching aim of the research, is to develop deeper levels of understanding (McEvoy & Richards, 2006). This research is therefore an exploratory piece of research. The research design is mixed, using survey method for data gathering, with both limited choice and open ended questions.

### **3.2.3 The Researcher's Position**

Due to the complex and subjective nature of the world, it is argued that its essence cannot be captured in an objective, detached way (Moore, 2005). Researchers are said to apply criteria to assess theory which results in the data collected being value or theory laden (Willig, 2008). Researcher also need to be aware of their presence in the research and the influence this may have on what is to be measured (Bracken, 2010). This value conscious position was taken in this research; reflecting the researcher as both a theorist and thinker (Willig, 2008).

The processes of the current study are reported in detail to allow future researchers to repeat the work, although not necessarily gain the same results. This includes providing detail of the process of creating the survey, gathering participants and distributing the survey to these participants; collecting data, the research design, implementation and reflecting on the overall effectiveness (Shenton, 2004). The research is placed within a specific culture, context and time. This allows the reader to make a judgement about the applicability of the research findings in their own situations (Mertens, 2015).

### **3.3 Purpose of the Research**

All research needs a purpose (Robson, 2002). As laid out in the introduction and literature review, there is currently no research which has been conducted into the current contribution of EPs to special schools which cater for CYP with PMLD. For this reason, an exploratory approach was chosen for this research

and is in line with Robson's statement of the purpose of exploratory research; seeking to find out what is happening and provide new insights, especially in little understood situations (Robson, 2002, p59). This is synonymous to the current research which aims to explore the current contribution of EPs to a specialist setting, asking questions of both EPs and school staff in order to provide a rich insight into this area.

The purpose of exploratory research is said to be to generate ideas and hypotheses for future research (Robson, 2002). It is hoped that the results of this research will inform future research and practice of both EPs and special schools.

### **3.4 Research Technique**

The research design used in this research is a mixed methods design. This includes both quantitative and qualitative features in the design, data collection and analysis (Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2009 as cited in Mertens, 2015). Both qualitative and quantitative methodologies are considered appropriate within a critical realism framework and the combination of techniques is often suggested to be the most effective approach (Bisman, 2010; McEvoy & Richards, 2006). The quantitative and qualitative methods are used complementarily in order to use the strength of one method to enhance and contribute to the performance of another (Morgan, 1998).

The principle method is quantitative through the use of descriptive statistics as this has strengths most central to the research goal. Both quantitative and qualitative content analysis provide additional strengths that increased the

ability to achieve the research purpose and respond appropriately to the data produced (Morgan, 1998).

### **3.5 Research Design**

‘Design is concerned with turning research questions into projects’ (Robson, 2002, p79). The model used in this research is guided by Robson (2002). This involves the purpose of the research and theory feeding into and helping to specify the research questions. These research questions then form the question to be answered, which in turn informs the methods to be used and the strategy decided on when sampling. It is argued that a good design framework will have good compatibility amongst these components.

Previous research which involved collecting information from EPs and school staff demonstrated that it could be achieved through the use of quantitative tools such as surveys or questionnaires. This method allows for the collection of both quantitative data as well as qualitative data through the use of open-ended questions. The use of this research tool allows the exploration of the current contribution EPs are making to special schools from two specific professional groups; EPs and special school staff. The use of an online survey further allows for a large number of participants to be reached.

### **3.6 Development of the Research Tool**

Research strategies and the techniques employed must be appropriate for the questions the research is looking to answer (Robson, 2002). Two surveys were

created for this research. This included a survey to capture data from EPs in order to answer research question 1, and a separate survey for special school staff in order to answer research question 2.

The research questions were used to guide the questions which were included in each survey, i.e. to ensure that the data collected answered the question posed. The process by which this survey tool(s) were developed is described in more detail below.

### **3.6.1 Expert Jury and Participant Validation Group**

An expert jury was established which consisted of a main grade EP, a professional and academic tutor for the Educational and Child Psychology Doctorate and two senior specialist EPs. By incorporating professional peers in elements of the research, this allowed the introduction of peer scrutiny into the research project (as per Shenton, 2004). A participant validation group was also used, through which the survey designed was piloted, consisting of two main grade EPs from two separate authorities and two special schools staff, one member of senior management and a TA. It was hoped that, through the combined use of these two groups, the researcher made reasonable steps to ensure the internal validity of the survey and thus improve credibility. Feedback from the expert jury and participation validation group was then used to make necessary amendments to the survey questions as advised.

Once the survey had been created and sent out to the EPs/special schools within England, it was the decision of the EP and special school staff whether they wished to take part. The aim was to ensure that data was collected from participants who were willing to take part and give honest information freely.

### **3.7 Data Collection and Analysis**

This research captured the data through the use of a survey. The flow chart (Figure 1) visually demonstrated the process by which the survey was created and data collected.

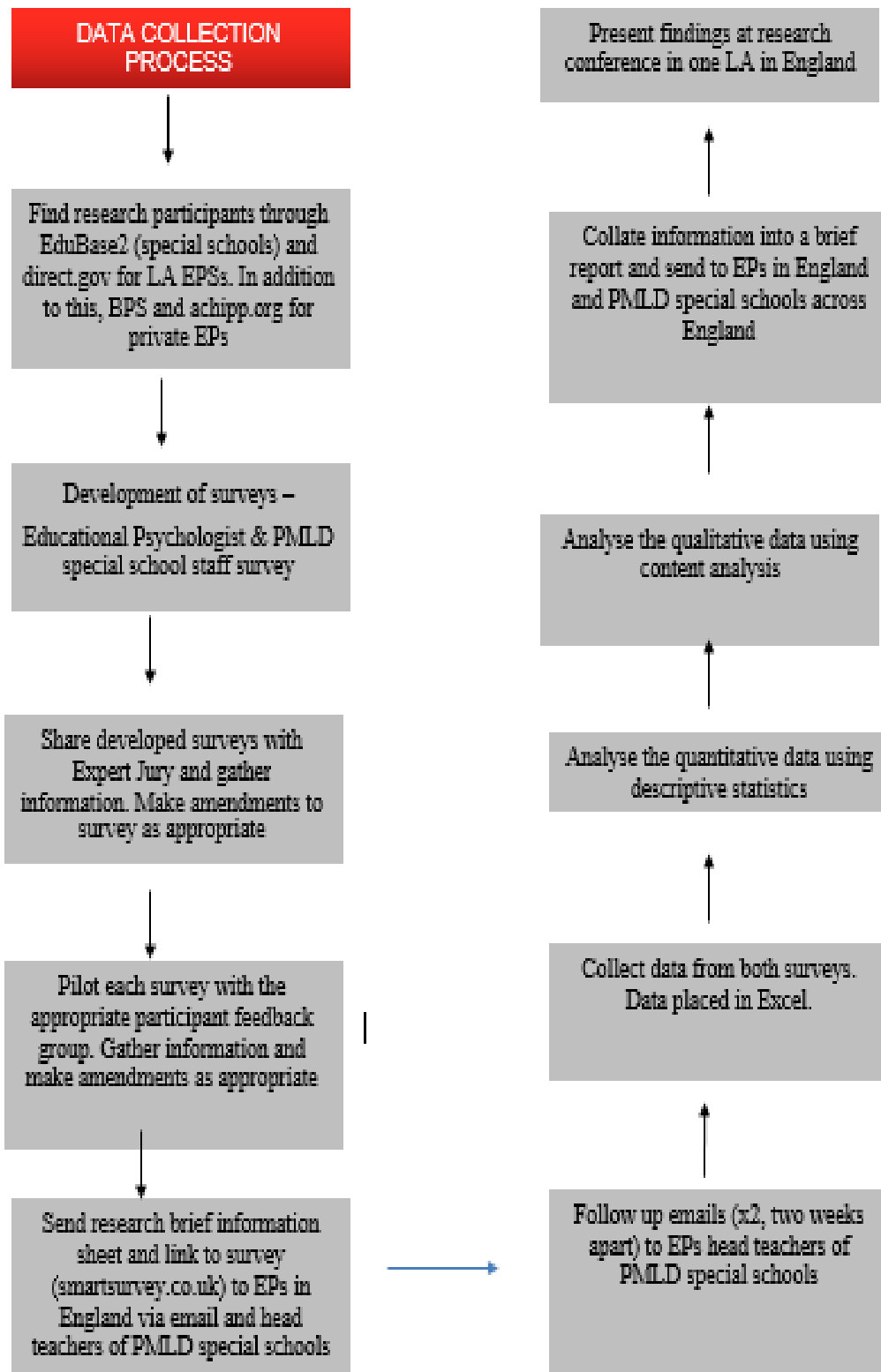


Figure 1: Flow Chart detailing the data collection process



### **3.7.1 Identifying Participants**

Participants in this research included EPs (main grade, specialist, management and independent/private practice) and special school staff (management, teaching and support staff). Emails for EPSs were found through their internet website and when necessary, contacting the service by telephone. Initially, a list of all the LAs were found through the directgov website which provided a list of all LAs in England according to region. 146 LAs were identified, including unitary authorities. A database was created to record this information and each authority website was visited in order to gain email information and where possible, the name of the Principal Educational Psychologist (PEP) for each authority.

Additionally, private and independent EPs were also targeted. This information was gained from two main sources. This included the BPS website which provides those who are registered with the BPS and provides their email information on the website. As such, this participant group was to an extent self-selected as they have chosen to advertise themselves via this website. The other source of email contact for private and/or independent EPs was the Association of Child Psychologists in Private Practice (AchiPPP). The contact information was sifted through to take note of each psychologist who identified as an EP and their email address recorded on the database.

Special schools in England which catered for PMLD were initially identified through the EduBase2 on the Department for Education website (DfE, 2017). A request for a list of 'special schools' in England was chosen from the

'establishment' search, which resulted in 1491 special schools being identified. It was then necessary to look at each special school in turn, specifically their 'PRU and SEN characteristics'. This provided a list of their 'SEN Priority from 1-4', including the areas of need that they catered for. Those which were identified as catering for PMLD students (n = 288) were collated and a special school database, was created with the names of the schools.

Prior knowledge informed the researcher that some special schools, although identified as catering for students with severe learning difficulties (SLD) also catered for PMLD students, either within the SLD classrooms or in a separate provision within the school. As a result, those special schools listed as catering for SLD students but not PMLD students were also noted on the database. The schools website and/or OFSTED report was then visited in order to find out if they too catered for PMLD students. As a result of this additional research, 288 special schools which cater for PMLD were highlighted and included in the database.

### **3.7.2 Data Collection**

In addition to contacting EPs via email, EPNET, a forum for the exchange of ideas and information which includes EPs and those working in related fields, was also used to access EPs who may have not received the email from their service or those who were not registered with the BPS or ACHIPPP. PEPs were also targeted through NAPEP (National Association of Principal Educational Psychologists). Personal mails were sent out every two weeks for six weeks in addition to twice on EPNET and once on NAPEP.

Special school head teachers were contacted via their school email address. Again, it was requested that the head teachers distribute the attached survey link and covering information sheet via email to their school staff.

### **3.7.3 Data Analysis**

Descriptive statistics and content analysis were used to analyse the data which was collected from the surveys. Smart survey provided descriptive statistics in the form of percentages and simple diagrams (pie charts) to represent the quantitative responses by participants. Content analysis was used to analyse the qualitative data provided by the survey. The reasons for this alongside the content analysis presented below.

### **3.7.4 Content Analysis**

Content analysis involves examination of data such as printed matter in an attempt to understand what they mean to people. It involves systemically reading a body of text, images or symbolic matter (here, text) which is not necessarily from an author's or user's perspective (Krippendorff, 2013, p10).

The framework for analysis employs the following conceptual components;

- *A body of text;*
- *A research question the analyst is seeking to answer by examining the body of text;*
- *A content of the analysts choice within which to make sense of the body of text;*

- *An analytical construct which allows the operationalisation of what the analyst knows about the context of the body of the text;*
- *Inferences that are intended to answer the research question. This is seen as the basic achievement of the content analysis carried out;*
- *Validating evidence which provides ultimate justification of the content analysis.*

Content analysis is said to be ‘an empirically grounded method which is exploratory in its process and predictive or inferential in its intent’ (Krippendorff, 2013, p1). It is a research technique for providing replicable and valid inferences from texts and represents a scientific tool which provides new insights and aims to increase the researcher’s understanding of a particular phenomenon. As such, it was considered a fitting technique to be used in the current research where the researcher aimed to reach a deeper understanding of both EP and special school staff’s perspectives.

In the context of this research, the qualitative text provided by the participants was analysed in order to *infer meaning*. The emphasis on drawing inferences is reiterated by Merten who writes that ‘content analysis is a method for inquiring into social reality, which consists of inferring features of a nonmanifest context from features of a manifest text (Krippendorff, 1980b as cited in Merten, 1991). It is argued that a context is always constructed by someone, in this instance the content analyst, despite an attempt to objectify it.

Again, this is fitting with the epistemological approach taken in this research. As highlighted in the *researcher position* above, Krippendorff argues that one cannot deny content analysts' interest and conceptual participation in what their analysis reveals and the extent to which the analyst's world makes sense to their peers is ultimately dependent on how compelling the case is that they make (Krippendorff, 2013).

#### **3.7.4.1 Content Analysis in the Current Research**

Although the research was intended to be primarily quantitative in nature, the richness of the data offered by the respondents prompted the author to use various depths of analysis in content analysis in order to capture comprehensively the meaning expressed. The content analysis in this research is guided by Robson (2002) and Krippendorff (2013) and explored below.

#### **3.7.4.2 Semantical Content Analysis and Sign-vehicle Analysis**

When analysing the current data, semantical content analysis and sign vehicle analysis were employed. This involved classifying signs according to their meanings, which can involve counting the number of times reference is made to working systematically, irrespective of the particular words used to make the reference. Further to this, designations analysis was also used. This provides the frequency at which certain objects (persons, such as head teachers; groups, such as parent groups or concepts, such as systemic working) were referred to. This is in essence, subject-matter analysis.

Sign-vehicle analysis was also utilised. This procedure involved classifying content according to the 'psychophysical' properties of the sign. An example in this research is counting the number of times 'time' appears in the qualitative data provided by EPs.

#### **2.7.4.3 Narrating and Inferring**

The processes operated when analysing the qualitative data provided by the surveys in this current research included narrating and to a certain extent, inferring. Narrating involves the researcher making the results comprehensible for others. In the present research, this involves commenting on the significance of the findings from the research and discussing recommendations for actions, including practical recommendations to the field of Educational Psychology and that of future research (see discussion, chapter 5).

Inferring was also used to analyse the qualitative data provided. This bridges the gap between the descriptive accounts of text to what they mean, refer to, provoke or cause (Krippendorff, 2013, p85). As content analysis is context sensitive, it allows the researcher to process, as data, texts that are 'significant, meaningful, informative and even representational to others' (Krippendorff, 2013; p41). Context-sensitive methods act to acknowledge that data is read and made sense by others, and they proceed by references of their own. As such, inferences drawn through the use of these methods have a better chance of being relevant to the users of the analysed texts (Krippendorff, 2013). Figure 2 below demonstrates the content analysis process.

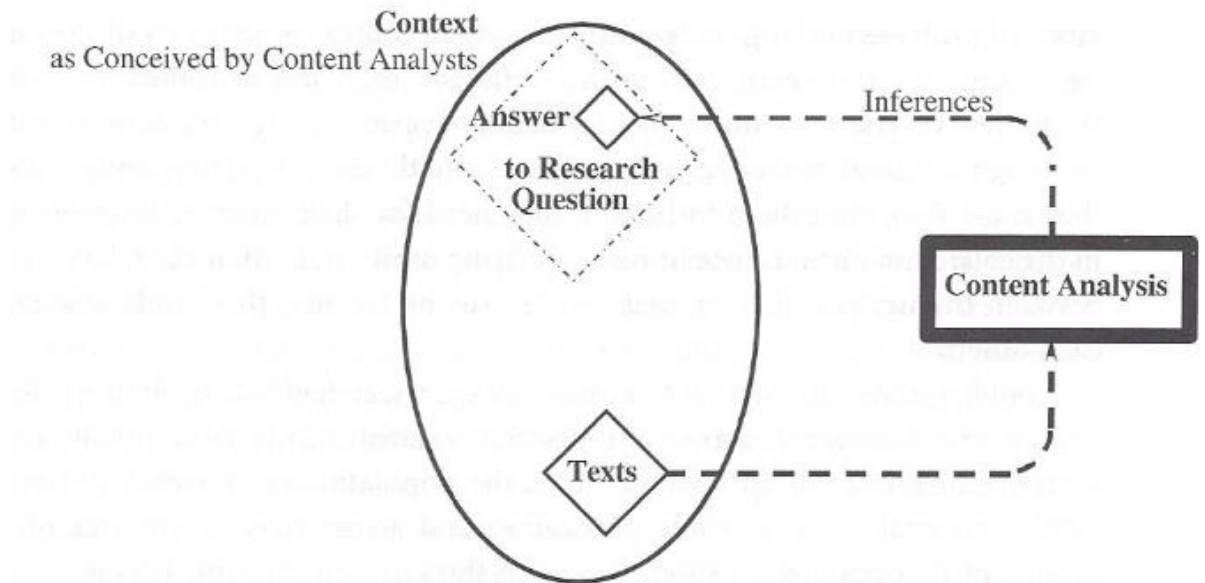


Figure 2: Content Analysis: Answering Questions Concerning a Context of Texts (Krippendorff, 2013)

### 3.8 Validity and Reliability

The aim in this research was not only to be transparent with the way in which the data was collected but also improve the validity of what is being collected. To go some way in accounting for the value conscious position of the critical realist researcher, an expert jury was established. In this role, the participants used their psychological knowledge advice and guidance on the questions being asked of both the EPs and special school staff. By incorporating professional peers in elements of the research, this allowed the introduction of peer scrutiny into the research project (Shenton, 2004). It is hoped that this also addressed some face validity issues.

A participant validation group was created to evaluate the survey from the perspective of the target audience and pilot the survey. Again, any comments

were noted and amendments were made as and when appropriate. Through the use of this group and the expert jury, it was hoped to ensure the validity of the survey - that it measures what we intend it to measure. Once the final survey has been created and sent out to the EPSs/independent and private EPs and PMLD Special schools within England, it was the decision of the EP and the staff at the special schools whether they wish to take part. The aim was to ensure that data is collected from participants who are willing to take part and give honest information freely.

When considering reliability, it has been acknowledged that the research is taking place within a specific context, culture and time. By placing the research within this particular context, this allows the reader to make a judgement about the applicability of the research findings in their own situations (Mertens, 2015). Through the use of the survey, it is hoped that this provides an objective measure that will allow some generalisation of findings.

When considering the use of content analysis in the analysis of the data in this research, it is argued that research techniques used should result in findings that are replicable (Krippendorff, 2013). As such, researchers working at different points in time and under different circumstances should get the same results when applying the same technique to the same phenomena.

Krippendorff argues that 'replicability is the most important form of reliability' (Krippendorff, p24). Considering this, the qualitative content analysis which took place in this research was discussed and vetted by the author's Director of



Studies in order to go some way to ensuring the credibility of the qualitative content analysis carried out.

### **3.9 Ethical Considerations**

#### **3.9.1 Maintaining Ethical Standards**

The research proposal was carefully considered and agreed by the University of East London Research Ethics Committee (see Appendix A). It was also verbally approved by the Deputy Principal and Principal EP in the LA in which the researcher was based.

The Health and Care Professionals Council (HCPC) standards of conduct, performance and ethics (2012) in addition to the British Psychological Society (BPS) code of ethics, was strictly adhered to throughout this research.

The online survey package, Smart Survey ([smartsurvey.co.uk](http://smartsurvey.co.uk)), used to gather the data, adhere to the UK data protection.

#### **3.9.2 Informed Consent**

All participants were required to read the research and consent information which was included at the beginning of each survey. This outlined the aim of the research and how the information was to be gathered, collated and used (See Appendix E). By being transparent with the potential participants from the beginning and throughout the data collection, the aim was to avoid any deception. The participants were then required to indicate that they had

understood the information and consent letter and given their consent in order to complete the survey.

### **3.9.3 Right to Withdraw**

The information and consent letter presented to each participant before completing the survey indicated that they had the right to withdraw at any time, up until the point of data analysis. It was reiterated that this would result in no penalisation on their part.

### **3.9.4 Anonymity Risk**

Before completing the survey, participants were reassured that the survey was completely anonymous. The participants were able to consent to the participation in the survey as part of the survey completion; as such, no names or signatures were required which would have identified them. The EP and special school staff were only asked to provide the region in which they work in order to give some geographical context e.g. North East. The aim of this is to provide reassurance that information collected will not be attributed to a particular school or EP. The researchers email was provided to participants in order to allow them to ask questions regarding the survey and have any queries they may have addressed by the researcher. This was the decision of the participant however to identify themselves as taking part in the research and would not/did not result in their name being attributed to a completed survey.

### **3.9.5 Data Protection**

The online survey package which was used to gather the data adheres to the UK data protection guidelines (<https://www.smartsurvey.co.uk/security>). In order to ensure that the information was kept securely, it was stored on the survey site until it was required for analysis. Smart survey confirmed that only the administrator would have access to the data collected and this would only be with prior consent from the researcher. At no time was this requested during the research process (<https://www.smartsurvey.co.uk/privacy-policy>).

When the information was transferred to a laptop for data analysis, this information was kept securely on a password protected laptop which was only available to the researcher. The data will be stored for a maximum of 3 years for the purpose of further analysis and publication. Following this time, the data will be destroyed.

### **3.10 Relevance and Impact of the Research**

It is stated that practitioner research should be designed to impact services and as a direct result, impact service users. The research undertaken here is exploratory and as such it is difficult to predict the outcome of the findings. It is hoped that the data gathered will be used to guide EPS's service priorities in approaching their work with special school where it is considered necessary to facilitate positive working relationships between the EPS and special schools. Individual EPs will be able to utilise the information to guide planning meetings. Furthermore, special schools will be given an insight into the work EP services are willing to carry out.

The findings from the research will be summarised into a compact briefing sheet on the main aims of the study and the research findings. This will be shared with all EPSs across England, private and independent EPs through the emails collected as part of the data collection process and all PMLD special schools in England. The information will be sent electronically to EPS's through their PEP who will be advised to disseminate the information to their team. The same briefing sheet will be sent to Head teachers of all special schools which cater for PMLD and asked to share the information through their school email system. The research findings will also be presented at a 'research and projects' day in one LA and at a conference held at the University of East London (UEL). The goal of the researcher is to publish this research in a psychology journal. The research will also be made available as a public document in the UEL Library and British Library.

### **3.11 Chapter Summary**

In this chapter the ontological and epistemological position of the research was outlined. This included the nature of critical realism and its congruence with this research. The purpose of the research was then stated followed by the research technique, data collection and data analysis. This included further detail on the characteristics of the research participants, pragmatics of data collection and the use of descriptive statistics and content analysis in the data analysis. Ethical considerations were then explored before the chapter was summarised.

## **Analysis of Results**

### **4.1 Introduction to the Current Chapter**

This chapter presents the findings of the data collected via the survey. It begins by reminding the reader of the research questions which drove the research (4.2) and the rationale for the analysis of results (4.3). The data is presented, analysed via both descriptive statistics and qualitative and quantitative content analysis. The data has been grouped into subheadings for ease of the reader and the rationale, data set this relates to and analysis will be provided for the reader throughout (4.4 – 4.11.) The chapter then ends with a summary of the findings (4.12).

### **4.2 Revisiting the Research questions**

The research questions which drove this research were:

Research question 1

*What is the current contribution of the Educational Psychologist to special schools which cater for children and young people with profound and multiple learning difficulties from the perspective of the Educational Psychologist?*

## Research Question 2

*What is the current contribution of the Educational Psychologist to special schools which cater for children and young people with profound and multiple learning difficulties from the perspective of special school staff?*

### **4.3 Rationale for Analysis of Results**

The analysis includes answers from the two research questions. Data was collected to answer each research question via a survey; one designed for educational psychologists to provide data for research question 1: *What is the current contribution of Educational Psychologists to special schools which cater for CYP with PMLD from the perspective of EPs?* And one designed for special school staff to provide data for research question 2: *What is the current contribution of Educational Psychologists to special schools which cater for CYP with PMLD from the perspective of special school staff?*

As can be seen in the analysis of findings in this chapter, the data collected from these surveys for each research question has been presented interchangeably. Signposts are made however through the analysis to signal which data set the analysis referred to and what analysis had been used. The reason for this was a deliberate choice on the part of the researcher. One reason is that this provides a fluid analysis of results which makes semantic sense to the reader. By grouping the analysis of results according to 'themes' such as 'setting the scene', 'what is the current contribution?', 'Potential barriers' and 'embracing opportunities', this acted to take the reader on a journey through the data.

Moreover, it also acted to highlight certain commonalities and, at times, differences, between the responses of both EPs and special schools. Whilst the questions for EPs and special school staff varied slightly, many were the same or similar. This allowed two different perspectives on the same topic to be discussed in parallel when it came to analysing the results. This in itself acted to provide a rich picture of what is currently being provided by EPs to special schools which cater for CYP with PMLD.

Furthermore, by presenting the results and analysis of the results for each research question based on 'themes', this also acts to allow the reader to consider the perspective of the EP alongside that of the special school.

The findings presented in the chapter were analysed through both descriptive statistics and content analysis. Quantitative data provided through the survey was analysed using descriptive statistics whereas qualitative data was analysed via content analysis. In reference to content analysis, this took the form of quantitative content analysis for data which could be grouped or qualitative content analysis, especially related to data collected via 'other' responses and the questions relating to barriers and opportunities for EPs working with PMLD special schools.

## **4.4 Setting the Scene**

### **4.4.1 The EP and its Service**

As stated above, the data that was collected via the survey provided a mix of qualitative and quantitative data. The quantitative data initially acted to provide some important background information to the EPs who responded to the

survey. The findings discussed below were provided from data collected from questions 2 - 5 of the EP survey; 2. *What is your role?* 3. *If applicable, what is your area of specialism?* 4. *What geographical area do you work in within England?* 5. *What is your model of service delivery?* & 6. *As an Educational Psychologist, how much experience do you have working with children and young people with Profound and Multiple Learning Difficulties?*

From those EPs who responded to the survey, approximately half were main grade EPs (50.2%) Table 1 below presents the quantitative data collected on the various posts held by respondents.

What is your current role?			
Answer Choice		Response Percent	Response Total
1	Principal Educational Psychologist	4.8%	10
2	Senior EP with Management responsibilities	12.6%	26
3	Senior EP with specialism	10.6%	22
4	Main grade EP	50.2%	104
5	Trainee EP	9.7%	20
6	Other (please specify):	12.1%	25

Table 1: Professional role held by EP respondents

12.1% can be seen to have chosen the 'other' category. EPs who chose this category held roles which they identified as Deputy Principal EPs (N = 2), EPs in independent practice (N = 3) and independent EPs (N = 8), EPs in private practice (N = 4) in addition to LA EPs and those who classified themselves as 'self-employed/freelance. One EP also identified themselves as a tutor on a training programme.

When asked to identify an area of specialism, 39.1% said that they did not have one. Nearly a quarter of the EP respondents identified social, emotional and mental health as an area of specialism (23.2%) followed by 17.9% with a



specialism in autism spectrum disorder (ASD). This data can be seen in the table 2 below.

Please specify your area of specialism, if applicable?			
Answer Choice		Response Percent	Response Total
1	Profound and Multiple Learning Difficulties	8.7%	18
2	Physical and neurological Impairment	3.9%	8
3	Specific Learning Difficulties/ Learning difficulties	14.0%	29
4	Social, Emotional and Mental Health	23.2%	48
5	Youth Offending Service	2.9%	6
6	Early years	10.1%	21
7	Children in Care/Post Adoption	7.7%	16
8	Autism Spectrum Disorder	17.9%	37
9	None	39.1%	81
10	Other (please specify):	17.4%	36

Table 2: EP respondents' areas of specialism

A number of 18 EPs (8.7%) identified as having a specialism in the area of PMLD. It is important to note that this data may reflect the self-selected sample, given the nature of the research being undertaken.

A variety of different areas of specialism were provided by EPs (n = 36) in the qualitative responses analysed through content analysis. 5 EPs noted Post 16 as their specialism, perhaps reflecting the drive for EPs to become more knowledgeable in this area, following the introducing of the SEND CoP in 2014 (DoH & DoE, 2014). Additional specialisms ranged from parenting, speech, language and communication (N = 5), multi-sensory impairment (n=2) to hearing impairment (n = 1).

Geographically, responses were provided by EPs who worked across England. This information is presented in the form of descriptive statistics and is shown in table 3 below.

What geographical area do you work in within England?			
Answer Choice		Response Percent	Response Total
1	North	23.2%	48
2	South	41.1%	85
3	East	22.2%	46
4	West	10.6%	22
5	Throughout England	2.9%	6

Table 3: Geographical areas within with EP respondents currently work

The data captured on the service delivery models demonstrates the varied and diverse nature of EP work in the current climate in addition to the varying funding streams through which their work is commissioned. Figure 3 below provides the full picture.

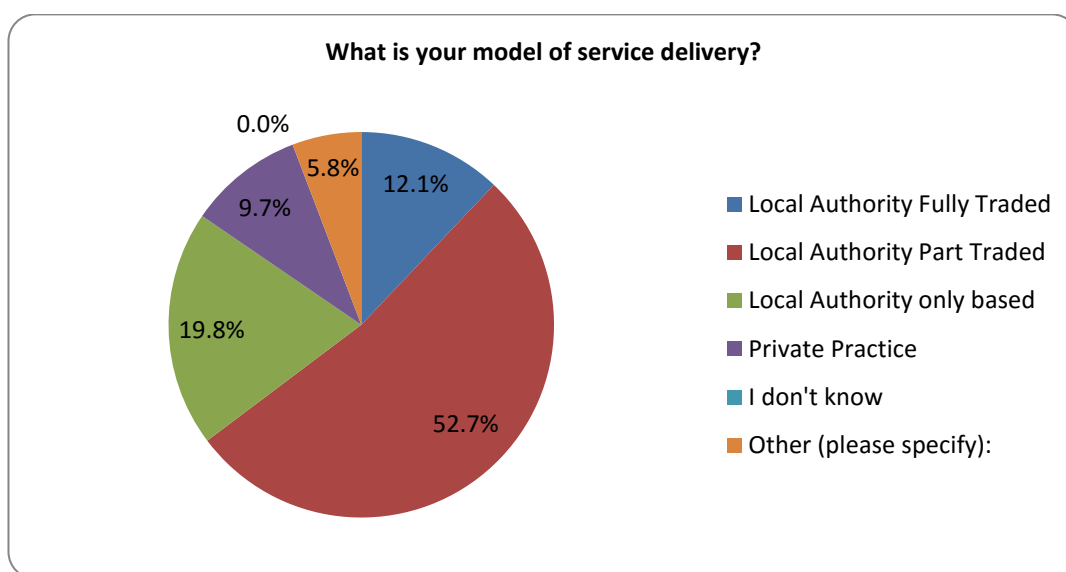


Figure 3: Graph demonstrating the model of service delivery where EPs work

Over half of the EPs worked within an LA which was part traded. Other EPs were LA only based in addition to a smaller number of EPs whose LA are fully traded. A small proportion were in private practice. Furthermore, responses

were received from an EP who works in a consultancy based role for an academy of special schools and an EP whose work is commissioned by charity. Just under 2/3 of EPs who completed the survey had more than 3 years' experience of working with CYP with PMLD (60.9%, N = 126) and only 6.8% had no experience at all (N = 14). This statistical information is demonstrated in Figure 4 below.

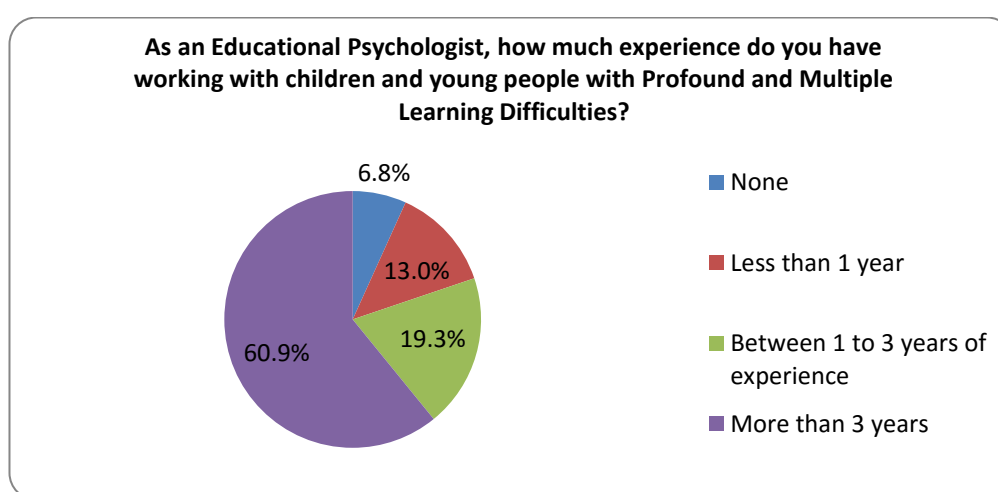


Figure 4: Graph of experience held by EP respondents with CYP with PMLD

It is important to bear in mind again that these figures may represent the self-selecting sample for this research. That said, it gives an interesting context to the current data and allows this to be borne in mind when considering the responses to later questions.

#### 4.4.2 Setting the Scene: The Special School and its Staff

As above, the data that was collected from special school staff via the survey also provided a mix of qualitative and quantitative data. This data provides some important background information to the special schools who responded

to the survey. The findings discussed below were provided from data collected from questions 2 – 4 of the special school survey; Q2 *What is your role within the school?*; Q3 *How is your special school funded?* And Q4 *Geographical area (within England) in which your school resides*

Table 1 below highlights the roles held by special school staff who responded to the survey. This information was analysed using descriptive statistics. A total of 44 special school staff responded to the survey.

What is your role within the school?			
Answer Choice		Response Percent	Response Total
1	Management staff	63.6%	28
2	Management with teaching responsibilities	18.2%	8
3	Teaching staff	18.2%	8
4	Support staff	0.0%	0
5	Pastoral staff	0.0%	0
6	Other (please specify):	0.0%	0
<b>answered</b>			<b>44</b>

Table 4: The roles held by special school staff respondents

Nearly 2/3 of those who responded were management staff. The additional staff were either management with teaching responsibilities or teaching staff. No responses were received from support or pastoral staff.

When analysing the data collected from question 3 'How is your special school funded?' it was found that nearly 90% of these schools were maintained by their Local Authority. One school also identified as an independent special school. These descriptive statistics are shown in the table below.

How is your special school funded?			
Answer Choice		Response Percent	Response Total
1	Local Authority Maintained	88.6%	39
2	Independent	2.3%	1
3	Don't know	0.0%	0
4	Other (please specify):	9.1%	4
<b>answered</b>			<b>44</b>

Table 5: Table showing how the special schools surveyed are funded

Information provided by 4 special schools who chose the 'other' response and analysed using content analysis included a free school; 'initial GAG (General Annual Grant) direct from the EFA (Education Funding Authority) and the top up from placing authorities', an academy, a multi-academy trust with half of their funding direct from the DFE and an EFA.

Responses to the survey were received from special schools which cater for CYP with PMLD, located across the country. This quantitative information collected was analysed using descriptive statistics and presented in the graph below.

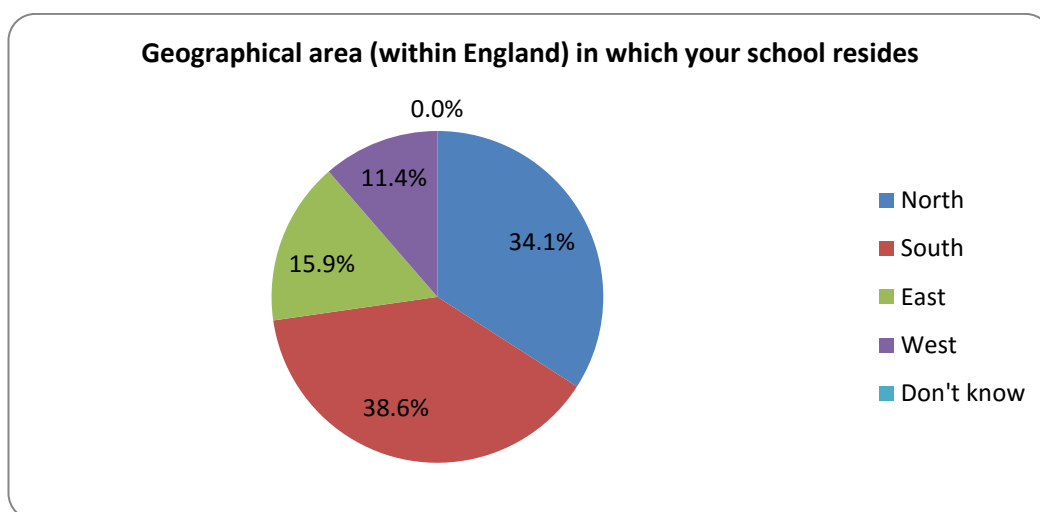


Figure 5: Chart showing the geographical areas in which the special schools reside

As can be seen above, the largest response was received from special schools in the south of England (N = 17, 38.6%). This was closely followed by the North of England (N = 15, 34.1%). There were 7 responses from schools in the East and 5 in the West.

## **4.5 What is the Contribution? The Current Picture**

### **4.5.1 Link EP and Special Schools**

The findings presented below have been gathered via answers to questions 7 – 8 of the EP survey. Additionally, information from questions 11, 12 and 13 was used in order to provide a more detailed analysis of the relationship between the EP and special schools. These questions included Q7 *Are you currently a link Educational Psychologist (main point of contact) for a special school which caters for children and young people with PMLD?* And Q8 *Have you ever been a link Educational Psychologist (main point of contact) for a special school which caters for children and young people with Profound and Multiple Learning Difficulties?* Q11 *How often do you have scheduled visits with your PMLD special school in the school year 2015-2015?* Q12 *How often do you have indirect contact with your special school (e.g. via email/telephone)?* Q13 *How would you rate the relationship between you and your special school?*

It also includes analysis of data collected from questions 5 – 10 of the special school survey; Q5 *Do you have a named Educational Psychologist(s) for your school or do you contact the Local Authority directly if you require an Educational Psychologist's input?* Q6 *If applicable, how effective was the*

*Educational Psychologist's involvement? Q7 In the school year 2015-2016, how much direct contact have you had with an Educational Psychologist? Q8 If applicable, how effective was the Educational Psychologist's involvement? Q9 Educational Psychologists often provide recommendations in their reports following a piece of work. If applicable, what impact have these recommendations had on your practice with CYP with PMLD? Q10 How would you rate the relationship between yourself and the Educational Psychologist(s)?*

The analysis of these questions was carried out via descriptive statistics and content analysis and this will be signposted in the commentary below.

From the information gathered via question 7 and analysed using descriptive statistics, 36.2% (n = 75) of the EP respondents were currently a link EP for a special school which caters for CYP with PMLD. Nearly 2/3 of respondents were not currently a link EP and 4 EPs identified that they were directly employed by a PMLD special school. This descriptive statistic information is shown in the table 6.

<b>Are you currently a link Educational Psychologist (main point of contact) for a special school which caters for children and young people with PMLD?</b>			
<b>Answer Choice</b>		<b>Response Percent</b>	<b>Response Total</b>
1	Yes	36.2%	75
2	No	60.4%	125
3	I am directly employed as an Educational Psychologist by a special school which cater for children and young people with profound and multiple learning difficulties	1.9%	4
4	Other (please specify):	1.4%	3

Table 6: EPs currently a link EP to PMLD special school

3 EPs chose to respond in the 'other' category. One EP shared that they had just left the position of consultant to an independent special school for PMLD and Severe and challenging behaviour in addition to ASD. Another EP was seconded one day a week to an SLD primary school which catered for PMLD in addition to an EP who has worked in schools which cater for PMLD CYP across 5 LAs.

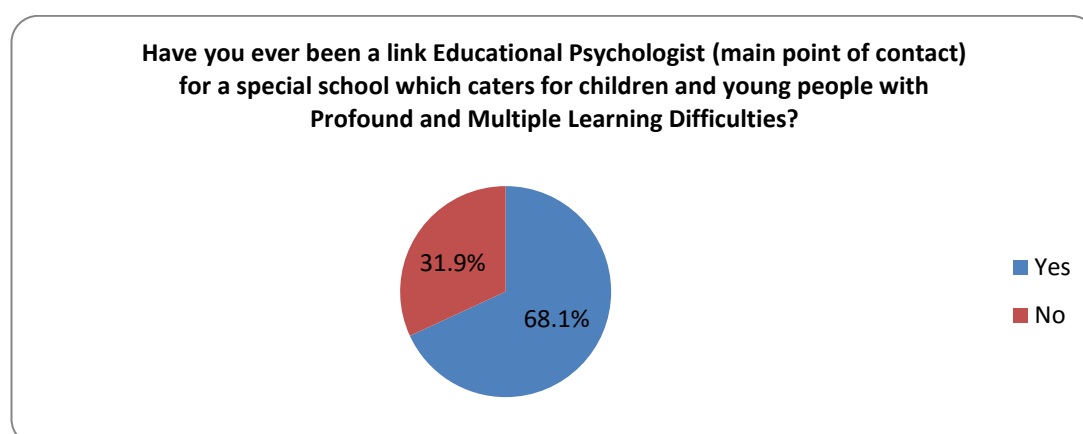


Figure 6: Percentage of EPs who have previously been a link EP to a PMLD special school

The graph above shows that 68.1% of EP respondents had previously been a link EP (N = 141) and approximately 1/3 who had not. Qualitative information gathered from responses to questions 11-13 appears to suggest that the relationship between EPs and special schools appears to be more positive when there is increased contact between these two.

Question 5 on the special school survey provided quantitative information which was analysing descriptive statistics and is presented in the graph below. It was found that over half of the special schools (61.4%, N =27) had a named EP for their special schools from the LA. It is important to consider this data in the context of the number of special schools who responded being primarily LA



maintained. Others would contact the LA when they required an EP (18.2%, N = 8) in addition to some which would pay as and when they felt they required EP input (N= 5). Only 2.3% (N=3) did not access EPs.

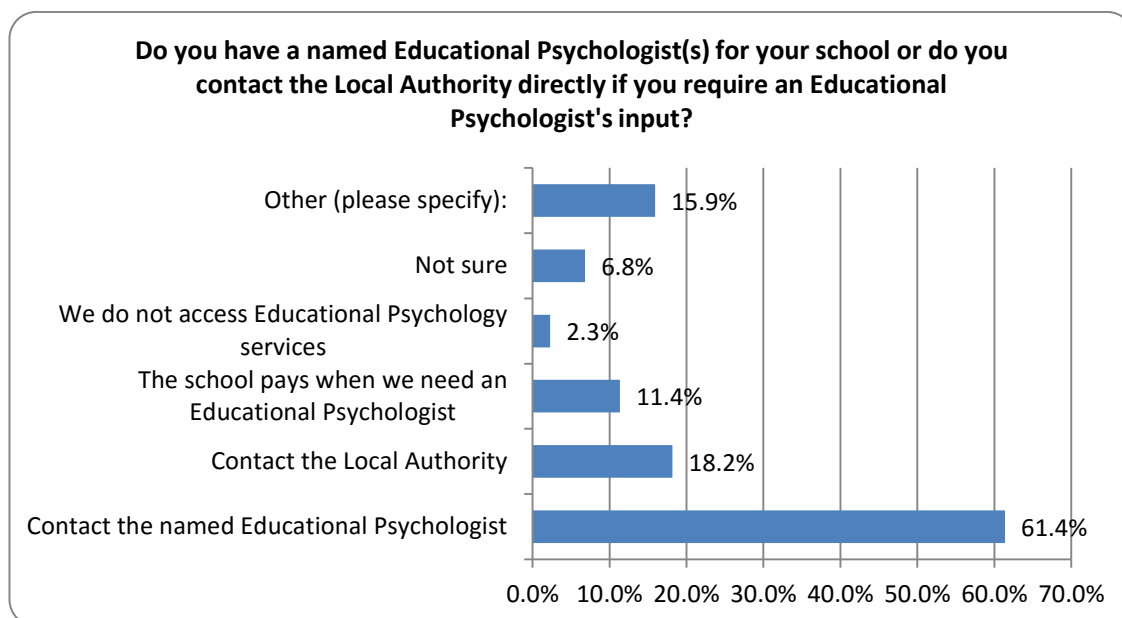


Figure 7: Graph demonstrating how PMLD special schools access EPs

Two schools noted that they employed their own EPs, either as a school or as part of an academy.

#### 4.5.2 Special school Contacts

The findings presented below have been gathered via answers to questions 9 - 10 of the EP survey. These questions included *Q9 If applicable, who is your main point of contact at your special school?* And *Q10 Is there anyone else you would like/would have liked to have regular contact with at the special school?* It also includes analysis of data collected from question 5 of the special school survey; *In the school year 2015-2016, how much direct contact have you had with an Educational Psychologist?*

When considering main point of contact at the special school, the data collected from the EP respondents was analysed using descriptive statistics and is presented in the table 7 below. A quarter of the EPs identified the SENCo as their main point of contact (N = 52, 25.1%). 20.8% of EPs said that the head teacher was their main point of contact (N = 43). 11.6% (N = 24) said that they don't have a main point of contact.

If applicable, who is your main point of contact at your special school?			
Answer Choice		Response Percent	Response Total
1	SENCo	25.1%	52
2	Head teacher	20.8%	43
3	Deputy head teacher	15.0%	31
4	Class Teacher	2.9%	6
5	I don't have a main point of contact	11.6%	24
6	Other (please specify):	24.6%	51

Table 7: EP's main point of contact within their PMLD special school

Additional qualitative information was captured via 'other' (n=51). Amongst this, 16 EPs noted that the question was not applicable as they do not currently work with a PMLD special school. Three noted that it depended on the school or the case and a further three said they were free to choose who they wished to contact. Five noted the head of phase or key stage with an additional seven noting members of the senior management team.

When asked who they would like/would have liked to have had contact with, 30% of EPs preferred the class teacher (N= 62). This was closely followed by the head teacher (26.1%, N = 54). These findings are shown in Figure 8 below.

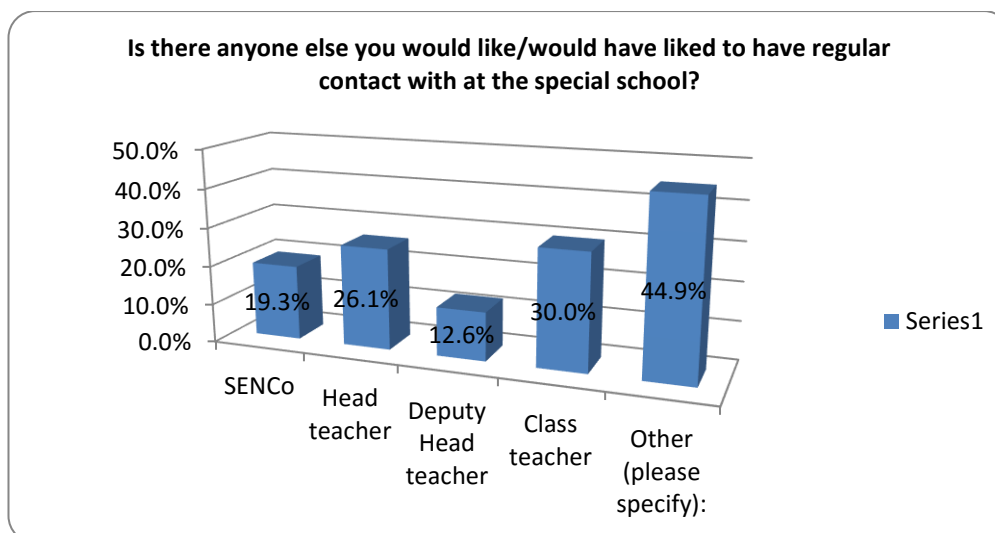


Figure 8: Special school staff EPs would like to have regular contact with

Almost half of the participants chose to provide further information on this (44.95%,  $n = 93$ ). 19 noted that this question was not relevant to them, with seven specifically stating that this was due to the fact that they do not currently work with a PMLD special school. Many indicating that they were happy with their current arrangements and did not wish to change them ( $n=13$ ). This question appeared to be an opportunity for a large majority of EPs to reflect on their current practice i.e. who they currently have contact with in their special school. It was noted by some respondents that their work was often arranged by various members of school staff, from senior management to teaching assistants ( $n=21$ ). One respondent stated; *'I have regular contact with all staff involved with CYP I work with and head teacher in addition to SENCo who is my main point of contact'*

Many EPs noted they could see who they wish, led by the needs of each individual case ( $n = 23$ ). Four respondents specifically indicated that they wished to have contact with other members within the school. One stated *'All*

*staff in general - good for relationship building and information gathering'* whilst another said *'Better involvement of CAMHS service would help for some young people'*

Two indicated contact with other multidisciplinary professionals including school based therapists (including SLTs, OTs and physiotherapists) and TAs.

Interestingly, one EP mentioned the pupil and parents being available, suggesting that in their practice at least, this was not automatic.

This information is of further interest when we consider it alongside the data gained from the special schools from responses to question 7, *In the school year 2015-2016, how much direct contact have you had with an Educational Psychologist?*

In the school year 2015-2016, how much direct contact have you had with an Educational Psychologist?			
Answer Choice		Response Percent	Response Total
1	No contact (have not directly worked with an Educational Psychologist)	27.3%	12
2	Limited contact with the Educational Psychologist visiting school (e.g. consultation with an Educational Psychologist) I have worked with one 2-4 times	25.0%	11
3	Contact only via telephone and email	4.5%	2
4	Moderate contact (e.g. several consultations, direct Educational Psychologist involvement with a child/class) 5-10 times	20.5%	9
5	Considerable (e.g. worked directly alongside the Educational Psychologist with a child/class) More than 10 times	13.6%	6
6	Other (please specify):	9.1%	4

Table 8: Amount of contact special schools had with an EP 2015-2016

This data indicates a variation in the special school's experience of contact with the EP when they visited their school in the academic year, 2015 - 2016. Whilst some reported having no contact with the EP, 25% indicated limited contact, 1/5

moderate contact and 13.6% considerable contact. A number of 4 special school respondents chose to give an 'other' answer, with three noting no direct contact and one referring to statutory-led transfer review work specifically.

Again, when considering the figures, one should note that when compared to the number of EP responses (n=207), the number of school staff responses was much reduced, 44 in total. It should be noted that similarly to what EPs expressed, there may be positive relational link related to the intensity of relationship between special schools and link educational psychologists and the perception of that relationship.

#### **4.5.3 Scheduled Visits and Indirect Contact between EPs and Special Schools**

The findings presented below represents the analysis to questions 9 - 10 of the EP survey. These questions included *Q11 How often do you have scheduled visits with your PMLD special school in the school year 2015-2016? And Q12 How often do you have indirect contact with your special school (e.g. via email/telephone)?* Furthermore, data was gathered from question 6 of the special school survey; *How often is your school visited by an Educational Psychologist?*

Information collected on the amount of scheduled visits the EPs had with their special schools was analysed using descriptive statistics. The highest percentage said they had none in a year (31.9%). It's important to note that nearly 2/3 of the EPs (n = 125) reported not currently being a link EP for a

PMLD special school, which could reflect this high number. 34.8% indicated that they had scheduled visits to their special schools between 3 – 11+ days a year. Over a quarter of the responses indicated that their visits depended on the needs of the school, with one EP stating that their service was *'flexible to meet the ever changing needs.'* This data is presented in the table below.

How often do you have scheduled visits with your PMLD special school in the school year 2015-2016?			
Answer Choice		Response Percent	Response Total
1	None in a year	31.9%	66
2	1-2 days per year	3.9%	8
3	3 - 4 days	11.1%	23
4	5-10 days	12.1%	25
5	11 days +	11.6%	24
6	It varies depending on the special school's needs	29.5%	61
7	Comments:	0.0%	0
Comments:			67
<b>answered</b>			<b>207</b>

Table 9: Frequency of EPs visits to their special school 2015-16

Qualitative information was also provided by the 67 EP respondents which provided further context for these answers and analysed using content analysis. 28 EPs said that this question was not applicable. Again, the drawbacks of the survey will be explored in more detail in the discussion.

Some EPs emphasised a needs-led or case led basis for visits (n=7). Statutory led work was also highlighted as a primary reason for these visits for many EPs (n=6). This included transfer reviews, annual reviews and statutory assessments; *'A lot of my allocated time was spent on transfer reviews'* and *'ONLY for statutory assessments for EYFS children (attending observation*

*placements in special school's nursery)*'. The other influencing factor highlighted by EPs appeared to be dependent on how much time was bought in by the schools. One EP noted that their special school had previously bought a two day a week package from the EP service but now this package has ended, the school only receive core time.

It is interesting to consider this data alongside that gained from Question 6 of the school survey. This question asked special schools to consider how often their school is visited by an EP. This information was analysed using descriptive statistics and is presented in the graph below.

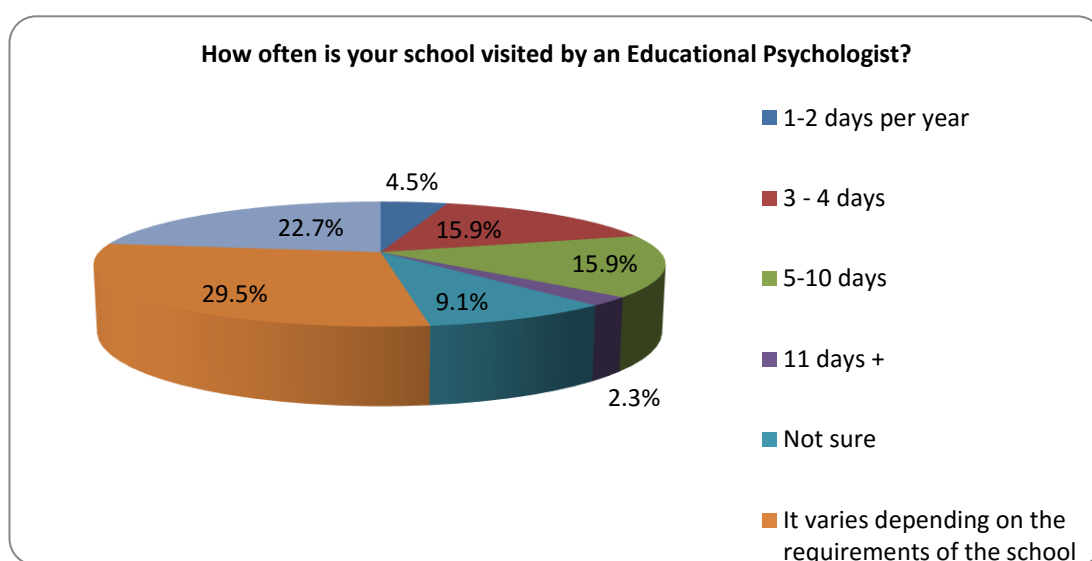


Figure 9: Frequency special schools reported they were visited by an EP

As shown, 31.8% reported having their school visited between 3 – 10 days a year. Interestingly, only 1 school reported receiving 11 or more visits per year. In line with the data provided by EPs, the majority of schools reported that their visits varied depending on the needs of the school (29.5%, N = 13). Further qualitative information collected and analysed using content analysis indicated

that 3 special school respondents noted that their school had not been visited by an EP (this year at least).

#### 4.5.4 Indirect Contact

Further to this, EPs were also asked how much indirect contact they had with their special school. This information, analysed using descriptive statistics is demonstrated in the graph below. It was found that this varied between 1-2 days (19.3%) to 11+ days (20.8%).

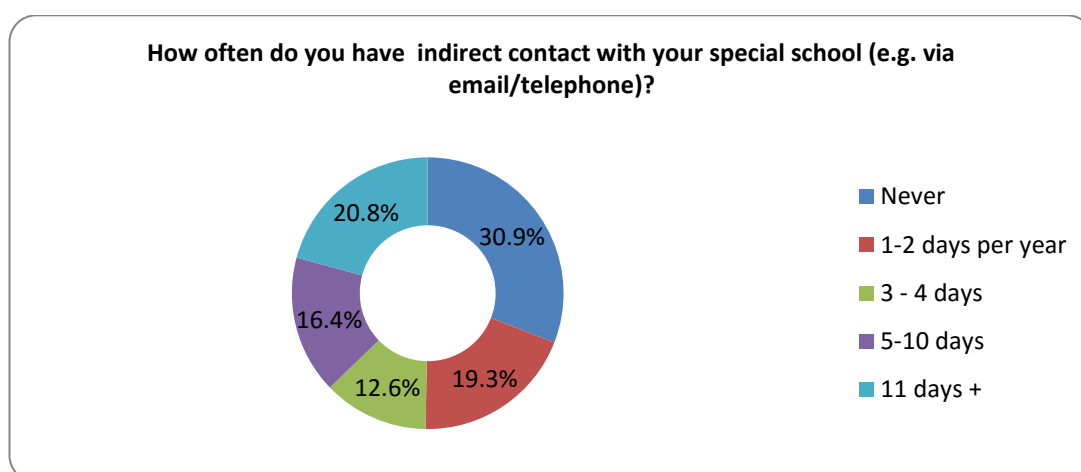


Figure 10: Frequency EPs have indirect contact with their special schools

#### 4.6 What Work is Currently Being Carried Out?

The findings presented below were gathered via answers to question 14 of the EP survey; *What has been your previous/current contribution to a special school for children and young people with Profound and Multiple Learning Difficulties?* This is in addition to data collected from question 11 of the special



school survey; *During the academic year 2015-2016, what work has been carried out by an Educational Psychologist with students in your school?*

Analysis of these questions was carried out via descriptive statistics and content analysis and this will be signposted in the commentary below.

An interesting picture can be seen by the data provided by EPs to what contribution they are currently or have previously carried out in these special schools.

<b>What has been your previous/current contribution to a special school for children and young people with Profound and Multiple Learning Difficulties?</b>			
<b>Answer Choice</b>		<b>Response Percent</b>	<b>Response Total</b>
1	Systemic (whole school/whole class work)	36.7%	76
2	Individual work (including assessments)	80.7%	167
3	Staff training	46.9%	97
4	Work with parents	42.0%	87
5	Staff supervision	14.5%	30
6	Consultations	61.8%	128
7	Interventions	25.6%	53
8	Statutory work (transfer reviews; Education, Health and Care Plan meetings/assessment/ annual reviews)	83.1%	172
9	Attendance and contribution to multi-agency meetings/assessment	55.6%	115
10	Other (please specify):	18.4%	38

Table 10: Contribution EPs reported having made to PMLD special schools

The largest areas of work were identified as statutory led work (83.1%, N = 172) and individual work (80.7%, N = 167). After this, consultation was the next popular piece of work (61.8%) followed by attendance to multi-agency meetings. Just under half indicated that they carried out parent work and staff training. The least frequent work being provided was interventions and staff supervision.

Additional qualitative information was provided by 18.4% of the EP respondents (N = 38). This information was analysed using qualitative content analysis.

Here, several EPs (n=8) reflected on whole school work they had carried out within the school including project work and working with the governing body. Joint working with other professionals and tribunals were also highlighted by several EPs. Specific pieces of work were also identified, including the use of Video Interactive Guidance (VIG), Video Enhanced Reflective Practice (VERP) and individual casework.

Question 11 of the special school survey asked the participants to identify the work which had been carried out by an EP in the academic year 2015-2016. As above, this data was analysed using descriptive statistics and is presented in the table 11.

During the academic year 2015-2016, what work has been carried out by an Educational Psychologist with students in your school?			
Answer Choice		Response Percent	Response Total
1	Whole school/whole class work	14.0%	6
2	Individual work (including assessments)	60.5%	26
3	Training	25.6%	11
4	Work with parents	25.6%	11
5	Supervision of staff	2.3%	1
6	Interventions (planning and/or delivering)	18.6%	8
7	Statutory work (transfer reviews; Education, Health and Care Plan meetings/assessment/ annual reviews)	65.1%	28
8	Transition work for older students	7.0%	3
9	Attendance of multi-agency meetings	34.9%	15
10	Other (please specify):	16.3%	7
11	Comments:	0.0%	0
Comments:			8

Table 11: Work special schools identified EPs had carried out in their schools 2015-16

The largest categories of work carried out was consistent with that reported by EPs; statutory work (63.6%, N = 28) and individual work (59.1%). This was followed by attendance to multi-agency meetings. The least frequent work was supervision of staff followed by transition work for older student and whole school work.

Further to the quantitative data collected, presented above, qualitative information was also collected from eight special school respondents through the 'other' and 'comments' section and analysed using content analysis. Five special schools indicated that no work had been carried out, to their knowledge. One made reference to one off consultations around a student, another to workshops for new qualified and inexperienced teachers aimed at building resilience whilst another spoke of a range of work carried out by their EP which included individual work, support for staff and parents in addition to input into research projects.

#### **4.7 Effectiveness and Impact of EP Involvement**

The analysis below results from the data collected via questions 8 and 9 of the special school survey; Q8 *If applicable, how effective was the Educational Psychologist's involvement?* And Q9 *Educational Psychologists often provide recommendations in their reports following a piece of work. If applicable, what impact have these recommendations had on your practice with children and young people with PMLD?*

This data was analysed using both descriptive statistics and content analysis and where this has been used will be signposted in the commentary below.

When asked to judge how effective the EP involvement was, the special schools showed an almost equal spread between none and considerable effectiveness. This is presented in the graph below, when the data was analysed using descriptive statistics.

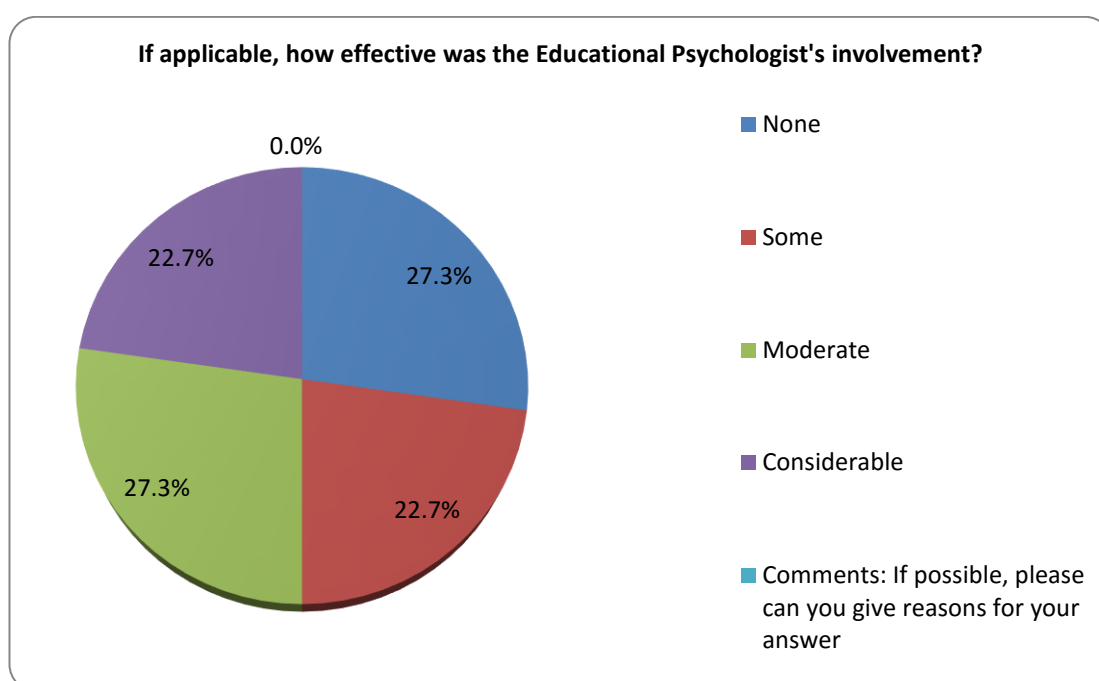


Figure 11: School schools' belief in the effectiveness of previous EP involvement

In addition to the descriptive statistics provided above, 22 special school responses choose to give comments which were analysed using qualitative analysis. Some schools emphasised the focus on statutory work by the EP this academic year ( $n = 4$ ). Other special school staff ( $n = 5$ ) commented the EP was not specialist enough or did not have time to understand their cohort. In contrast, other school staff ( $n = 4$ ) commented on EPs having sustained impact. This appeared to be achieved through ongoing work, with one school

commenting that they had worked closely ‘for over 10 years’. Another said the EP had direct impact in the classroom and staff training at all levels.

It is interesting to consider the data collected above with the information collected from question 9 of the special school survey; Q9 *Educational Psychologist often provide recommendations in their reports following a piece of work. If applicable, what impact have these recommendations had on your practice with children and young people with PMLD?*

The information collected from this question was quantitative and analysed using descriptive statistics. It is presented in the table below.

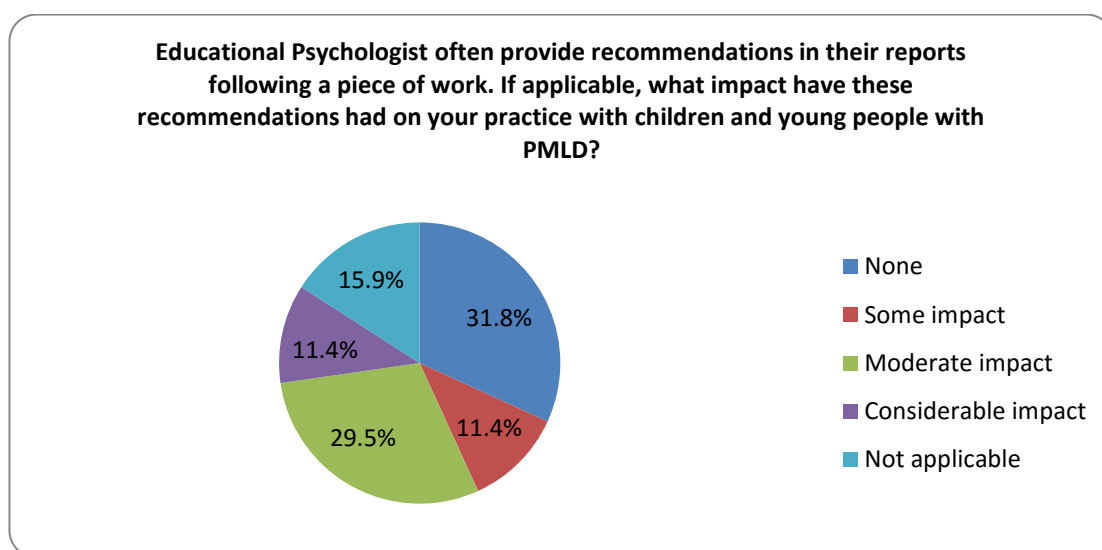


Figure 12: Impact of EP report recommendations on special school practice

Considering the graph above, 31.8% (N = 14) of schools chose ‘none’. 29.5% however indicated that they had a ‘moderate impact’ (N = 13). An equal number of schools said that they felt it had ‘some’ and ‘considerable’ impact (N = 5). Interestingly 7 schools (15.9%) said that this question was not applicable. This

could be because the schools had not worked with an EP or that they had worked with them in such a way that a report was not produced. No qualitative information was provided by the special schools for this question so they are hypotheses related to the data collected.

#### **4.8 Unique Contribution of the EP**

The data analysed in this section was provided by responses to question 14 in the special school survey; *Q14 Bearing in mind research that indicates a child within a school like yours can have involvement from up to 25 different professionals, what do you see as the distinctive contribution of the Educational Psychologists?* The data provided was qualitative and therefore was analysed using qualitative content analysis. A number of 37 special school respondents chose to provide a qualitative response whilst 7 chose to skip this question.

Areas which were highlighted by special schools included work around challenging behaviour, strategies and interventions for behaviour (n=4). Support for staff and parent work was also highlighted through specialist advice they were able to provide (n = 5). A large number of school staff (n=14) commented on the ability of EPs to be able to contribute a high level of research based knowledge and theory and 'methodology' which underpins learning. 'In-depth knowledge and insight' was referred to as well as helping to resolve 'deeper issues' or when 'a significant change in behaviour occurred'. Furthermore, it was suggested by several schools that the EP was able to provide an objective and professional view alongside independent insight, with one school

commenting that they were able to provide 'a fresh pair of eyes and ears' (n = 3).

A small proportion of special school staff were unsure and did not recognise a distinct contribution (n = 4), with one school commenting that they felt that that EPs had reduced impact compared to other professionals such as OTs and physiotherapists, for example. Another highlighted that although the input from EPs was compulsory they felt that they were not having a direct impact on the education of the children, with another school making reference to the statutory process but limited involvement outside of this. One school however highlighted that *'The key impact is made with very clear advice related to key observations and where relevant research related'*.

#### **4.9 Whose Role is it to Work with Special Schools?**

The analysis below results from the data collected via question 17 of the EP survey; Q17 *Whose responsibility do you think it is to work with special schools for children and young people with profound and multiple learning difficulties?* And question 15 of the special school survey; Q15 *Whose responsibility do you think it is to work with special schools?*

When considering whose responsibility it was to work with special schools for CYP with PMLD, it was found that nearly  $\frac{3}{4}$  of EPs said they believed it was all EPs responsibility to work with them. Only 13% believed it should be specialist EPs. This descriptive statistical information is presented in table 12 below.

Whose responsibility do you think it is to work with special schools for children and young people with profound and multiple learning difficulties?			
Answer Choice		Response Percent	Response Total
1	All EPs	74.4%	154
2	Specialist EPs	13.0%	27
3	Not sure	3.4%	7
4	Other (please specify):	9.2%	19

Table 12: Who should work with PMLD special schools: EP responses

EPs who chose to expand on this question (n = 19) commented on the importance of providing EPs with the opportunity to develop their skills and knowledge 'how will new EPs ever learn', with the suggestion that specialist supervision and support would be important (n = 9). Others also suggested that it could be an opportunity for EPs to utilise previous experience in this area (n= 5). In contrast to this, 59.1% of special school staff said they felt that this was a role for specialist EPs, whilst 27.3% believe it was the responsibility of all EPs

#### 4.10 Acknowledging and Overcoming Barriers

This next section provides an analysis of qualitative data collected from question 19 of the EP survey; Q19. *Please list up to 3 potential barriers to working with special schools catering for children and young people with profound and multiple learning difficulties. This could include areas such as: EP time not available/ bought in by the special school/ Educational Psychologists lack of up to date knowledge in the area/ difficult working relationship with special school* and question 17 of the special school survey; Q17 - *List up to 3 potential barriers you believe may affect Educational Psychologists working with special schools like yours. This could include areas such as: EP time not available/ bought in by the special school; Educational Psychologist lacks of up*



*to date knowledge in the area of PMLD, Difficult working relationships with school and Educational Psychologist; Other professionals involvement so Educational Psychologist not required/no value added.*

These questions produced qualitative data analysed via both qualitative (frequency of words) and qualitative content analysis. The questions provided a vast amount of data and as such, it has been separated into headings which reflect the categories which resulted from the analysis. A number of 38 special school respondents chose to provide an answer and 6 chose to skip this question. All 207 EP respondents provided an answer.

#### **4.10.1 Who is the Best ‘Man’ for the Job?**

When considering the potential barriers of EPs working in special schools which cater for CYP with PMLD, one area communicated strongly by EPs and special schools in this research was both the confidence of, and in, the EP. This related to both their knowledge and skills in the area of PMLD and the EPs confidence in their ability.

When EPs considered ‘potential barriers to working with special schools which catered for CYP with PMLD’, an overarching theme was a lack of confidence in working in this domain. Lack of confidence (n = 29), knowledge (n = 56) and experience (n = 33) appeared consistently in responses. Not only was this related to the EPs lack of belief in their skillset *‘EPs not feeling confident to use the skills they have or could develop to meet this population's needs’* but also a

belief of the views of the school *'School staff doubting EP ability to contribute because of lack of knowledge'*. This also led to the belief that the skillset was already available within the setting *'Having less knowledge than the staff/less practical experience'*.

When special schools were asked to consider the potential barriers they believed may affect EPs working with their special schools, this was also a dominant theme (n = 15); with *'Lack of EP knowledge and skill in relation to PMLD pupil'* and *'Other professionals involved, including our own skilled and experienced staff which can negate the need for EP involvement'* being highlighted frequently.

When considering potential barriers to working with these special schools, EPs suggested that *'School thinking they don't need help as they are skilled'* and *'EPs feeling a lack of 'expertise' in comparison to teachers with lots of experience'*. Here, this is dealing with two different perceptions. One in which the EP attributes the belief to that of the school and the other is EPs belief that they do not obtain the skills needed.

Further to this, one special school stated their *'previous experience of and EP not listening to and working effectively with staff'*. Similarly, on the same questions, one EP commented *'EPs underestimating the knowledge and skills of experienced special school staff'*. A joint appreciation and understanding of each other's roles and skills therefore appears key.

EPs also appeared unsure as to what they could offer in addition to other multi-agency staff who worked within the school (n = 7). It was acknowledged that a wide range of experts were involved with the school already, some of whom were permanent members of staff. One EP commented that this could make them feel that they are '*not really needed*' and they had a less important role than other professionals, such as SLTs and OTs.

One special school suggested that it was not just about having the knowledge but how this was actualised; '*Knowledge and expertise - working in special needs is a unique setting. The underpinning of knowledge and understanding of child development and educational approaches is just the beginning, how it is applied is the real skills. This is really where the educational psychologist skills should begin*'.

#### **4.10.2 Time, Time, Time**

When considering barriers to working in the specific context of special schools which cater for CYP with PMLD, the word 'time' occurred 142 times by EPs. It was used 33 times by the special schools. When exploring the qualitative data, this appears to refer to not only time when the school had not bought into the service (n = 23) but also EP time being very restricted (n = 42). Some EPs felt that the effect of this lack of time meant that it was not possible to carry out in depth work '*Limited time meaning more in-depth systemic work may not be possible*' and '*Hard to build momentum with intermittent visits, unless onsite*'. Other EPs commented on the impact of statutory work on their time.

Special schools commented on time, occurring 33 times. This was not just on the part of the EP *'EP time not available'* but also logistical constraints of the setting. One special school commented that there was a *'large number of students and staff needing support and just not enough time to do this'*. Others commented on the difficulty of teachers being released from class and time within the day for discussions. Another issue highlighted was the delay between initial visit and follow up visits.

The lack of time is placed in the context of relationships by EPs and special schools when considering how they would rate their current relationships. For example, *'I don't currently have any strong relationships with staff in special schools. Case work leads me there only occasionally'* (adequate). This is in comparison to those who rated their relationship with their special school as good or excellent for reasons such as *'established relationship (4+ years)'* (good) and *'I've worked with them for 14 consecutive academic year'* and *'long established working relationship'* (excellent). When considering potential barriers, another EP commented, *'Lack of sufficient time to develop relationships, trust and credibility with staff'*, demonstrating what the potential impact of this time has in this context.

This element of time therefore appears to feature heavily in the relationships which exists between the special schools and the EP. Special schools who rated their relationship with their EP as adequate commented on lack of contact or time to build a relationship with the EP. Special schools echo the data provided by EPs above, who rated their relationship as good or excellent. Those

schools who rated their relationship as good or excellent with their EP commented on them '*working together for over 10 year*' and working '*frequently and regular meetings*'.

#### **4.10.3 National and Local Context**

##### **4.10.3.1 EP Capacity**

This issue of time, as highlighted above, could be related to the national context of EP services and special schools. As highlighted by one EP, '*Limited number of EPs in circulation to enable EPS services to provide enough time to special school*' and '*short staffing*'. Special schools also acknowledged this problem '*EP service stretched not enough capacity to provide more hours*' and '*Lack of qualified EPs*'.

##### **4.10.3.2 Statutory Work**

EPs made reference to the impact of statutory work on the current contribution of Eps (n=10), stating '*statutory pressures overriding early intervention work*'; '*Statutory work taking preference*'; '*Huge amount of time involved in transfer reviews*'; '*Emphasis on EHC transfer report writing from the LA*'; '*too much statutory work*'. Special schools also acknowledged the issue of time and the impact of statutory work on the availability of the EP; '*Allocation of time being limited to statutory requirements*' and '*LA changing role of EPs through budget cuts, this includes cutting size of team and limiting role of EP in school to statutory duties*'.

One special school highlighted the danger and barrier to achieving potential systemic work within schools due to this system; *'Potential for all services to track through EHCPs and therefore become linked to individuals, which is gradually eroding staff training/ whole-school work'* (p121). Another special school commented;

*"My experience currently is that our Ed Psychologists are totally caught up in paper work, EHCP, tribunals, avoiding tribunals, transitional work, firefighting etc. The demand for their services couldn't be higher given the rise in our pupil population and complexity of need, however the colleagues I talk to are disillusioned with their job, sick of attending endless meetings and writing reports about children they barely know that it makes the whole system farcical and near to breaking point".*

#### **4.10.3.3 Educational Psychology Services**

EPs can be seen to have reflected on issues within their own service in addition to their perception of special schools as a system. When considering EP some suggested that the way in which work was prioritised acted as a potential barrier to working in these school settings. As one suggested succinctly *'low priority?'* Another reflected *"EP's not all being allocated to work in specialist settings and thus not having opportunities to work with children/adults in these areas"*. A large majority of the EPs reflected again on the pressure of statutory work and *'LA Bureaucracy'*.

#### **4.10.3.4 Political and Government Constraints**

Political and governmental constraints were highlighted by both EPs and special schools. One EP suggested that EPs are currently working in a climate which *'prioritising mainstream schools'*, suggesting that *"protecting EP resources for work with children and young people with disabilities requires a level of political commitment"*. Similarly, another EP felt that the current focus of Ofsted on academic attainment *"may result in staff feeling pressured to provide evidence of progress/ assessment. This may detract from the CYP's experience of school"*. Austerity cuts and the understanding of the EP profession by government was also highlighted in addition to the impact of schools becoming academies on EP 'buy in' time and LA boundaries influencing work carried about by EPs.

#### **4.10.3.5 School Budgets and Traded Services**

Cost was also an area which was highlighted by both EPs (n=9) and special schools (n = 11). The traded model which many EP services are operating, coupled with the budget held within the school are acknowledged as being a barrier to accessing the service *"School is concerned they may not have the money to buy EP time as budget is in deficit"* and *"Dwindling school budget!"*. EPs also recognised that cost played an important factor in their work within special schools such as these. There was an overall acceptance that budgets and resources are currently tight and this limits trading opportunities with EP services or leads to attempts to find resources cheaper elsewhere.

#### **4.10.4 The ‘Culture’ of the Special School**

In regards to special schools, one EP suggested special schools may not see utilising the EPS as a priority. Many EPs suggested that staff did not appear open to new ideas or not recognising areas for change, or defensive about taking on new ideas (n=25). Some EPs described a ‘resistance by special schools’ to engage or not seeking support from outside agencies. This is reiterated by another EP who suggested a culture of ‘going it alone’ within the school and seeing themselves as experts and not relying on outside professionals.

Another EP suggested that there was a culture of support embedded in special schools which *“historically has not included EP input”*. It is suggested that there is *“systemic resistance to external professionals...a sense of "but we've always done it this way”*. Another noted that special schools can be quite 'closed' cultures, they're used to managing and rarely exclude/request changes of placement so just get on with it. Highly developed identity and internal culture, hard to access from the 'outside'.

#### **4.10.5 Communication**

Communication between EPs and special schools appeared to be a concern raised primarily by EPs (n=11). It was suggested that due to the size of special schools, communication and sharing information as well as embedding practices was difficult or not consistent. Others expressed difficulties in contacting the right person as there wasn't a main point of contact.



#### **4.10.6 Lack of Shared Understanding**

Developing a shared understanding of the role of the EP also appears key in forming positive relationships with schools as well as being highlighted as a potential barrier to working in these special schools. Reference was made 51 times by EPs to understanding or clarify regarding their role in these specialist settings. One EP surmised *“I wonder if there is an in congruence in the perceived support that the school feels the EP is able to offer”*. Others suggested schools were unaware of the psychological contribution EPs could make or their lack of understanding of the EP role itself. It is suggested by some that schools see the role of EP primarily as a statutory one. One EP concluded that *“Further work is required to broaden staff perceptions of what our role is and the support we can offer”*.

Interestingly, it does not just appear to be the case of special schools lacking understanding of the role of the EP but also EPs understanding what their role is within the school. One EP noted that due to *“Different way of working to mainstream schools means EPs are often unsure of what contribution they can make”*. If this is the case, then this is likely to perpetuate this lack of clarity around the role of the EP in this context.

#### **4.10.7 Relationships**

Further to the data analysed from question 19 of the EP survey and question 17 of the special school survey; data analysed in this section was also collected from the responses provided by EPs to question 13 of the EP survey; *How*

would you rate the relationship between you and your special school? and special school responses to question 10 of the special school survey; *How would you rate the relationship between yourself and the Educational Psychologist(s)?*

The data for questions 10 and 13 from the special school and EP survey respectively provided both quantitative and qualitative data analysed using both descriptive statistics and content analysis. The reader will be signposted to the different analysis used and what data set this relates to throughout this section.

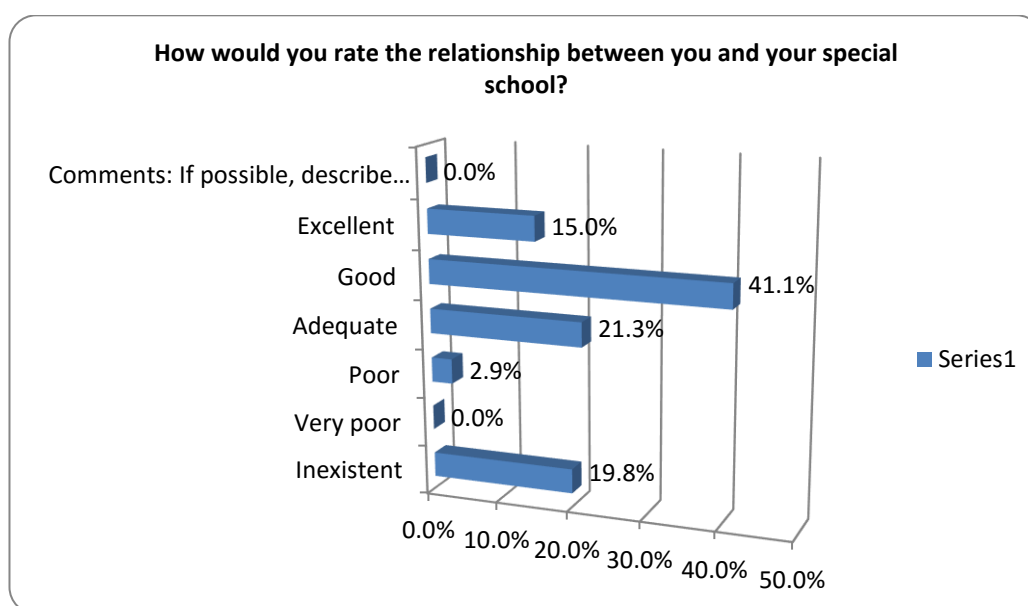


Figure 13: EPs rating of their relationship with their special school

Figure 13 above shows the quantitative data collected from question 15 of the EP survey; Q15 *How would you rate the relationship between you and your special school?*, analysed using descriptive statistics. It can be seen that 41.1% of EPs rated their relationship with their special school as 'good'. Only 2.9%

rated their relationship as 'poor' and a considerable 19.8% rated their relationship with their special school as 'inexistent'.

It is important to highlight that many of the EPs chose to give reasons for their choice (n=107). This information provided qualitative information and was analysed using content analysis, providing further insight into their reasoning for rating the relationships as such. Primarily, those EPs who identified their relationship with their special school as inexistent was due to the fact that they are not currently a link EP for this type of special school (n=14). In addition to this, some EPs who classified their relationship with the school as 'inexistent', 'poor' or 'adequate' noted that their special school did not call on their EP (n=4); *"The special school does not trade so therefore I am not able to carry out any systemic work which I think is what the school needs"* (adequate) and *"The special school does not buy into the service"* (inexistent). This suggests therefore that due to schools not buying in time from the EP service, it is acting as a barrier to forming positive relationships.

Interestingly, when relationships were rated as good and excellent, EPs commented that this was felt to be in part, due to a lack of mutual respect and understanding of each other's skills and expertise (n=17). One EP, who rated her relationship with the school as good noted *"The school seem interested in what I have to say"*. Others who rated their relationships as good, suggested that feeling valued and understood was central, commenting *"they valued the work completed around EHCP conversions"* and *"the school are generally well*

*engaged and prepared for working with me, and seem to value our work together”.*

The table below shows the quantitative data collected from question 13 of the special school survey; *How would you rate the relationship between yourself and the Educational Psychologist(s)?* analysed using descriptive statistics.

How would you rate the relationship between yourself and the Educational Psychologist(s)?			
Answer Choice		Response Percent	Response Total
1	Very poor	13.6%	6
2	Poor	4.5%	2
3	Adequate	22.7%	10
4	Good	34.1%	15
5	Excellent	25.0%	11
6	Comments: If possible, please give reasons for your answer	0.0%	0
Comments: If possible, please give reasons for your answer			18

Table 13: Special schools' rating of their relationship with their EP

As in the previous data set, some of the special schools also chose to give reasons for these ratings (n =18) and this qualitative data was analysed using content analysis. Three special schools who rated their relationships as very poor indicated that this was not applicable to them, suggesting they do not currently work with an EP. Another special school said that they felt the EP showed little interest in their students but relied on the teacher's opinion.

Frequency of contact appeared to be an important element when considering their relationship. Those who rated their relationship as adequate and poor made reference to lack of time to build a relationship and lack of regular contact (n=6). In contrast to this, those who rated their relationship as excellent made reference to working together for an extended time (n=3) *“we worked together*

*for over ten years*” and *“we work together frequently”*. Furthermore, two schools made reference to the EP being effective and eliciting change.

When analysing the qualitative data via content analysis from questions 19 of the EP survey and 17 of the special school survey, in which they were asked to identify three potential barriers to EPs working in special schools which cater for CYP with PMLD, relationships between schools and EPs was also identified as an important factor. Previous relationship experiences were highlighted by four special school staff, with two special school staff commenting on their experience of an individual EP *“Previous experience of and EP not listening to and working effectively with staff”* whilst another directly referred to the ‘relationship’ with the EP. An EP echoed this when commenting on the special schools previous *“poor experiences of working with EPs and thus not being brought in apart from statutory work”*, thus indicating a knock on effect on their current relationship and how the school chooses to use the EPs time.

EPs also considered relationships in the context of potential barriers (n=21). A lack of relationships was highlighted in addition to some difficult relationships, with one commenting *‘some personalities are difficult to deal with’*. Another suggested a poor relationship with the LA and the special school. The potential variable of time, as an important component to building positive relationships, appears to be a key factor here.

## 4.11 Moving Forward Together

### 4.11.1 Ideal Contribution

The findings presented below have been gathered via answers to question 15 of the EP survey; *Q15 What would your ideal contribution look like to a special school for children and young people with profound and multiple learning difficulties?* and question 12 of the special school survey; *Q12 What would your ideal contribution from the Educational Psychologist look like?*

The data collected was analysed using descriptive statistics and content analysis, when the respondents chose to provide an additional answer, such as 'other, please specify'. The reader will be signposted to when each analysis has been used.

What would your ideal contribution look like to a special school for children and young people with profound and multiple learning difficulties?			
Answer Choice		Response Percent	Response Total
1	Systemic (whole school/whole class work)	82.6%	171
2	Individual work (including assessments)	62.8%	130
3	Interventions	58.5%	121
4	Staff training	72.9%	151
5	Work with parents	72.9%	151
6	Staff supervision	57.5%	119
7	Consultations	77.8%	161
8	Statutory work (transfer reviews; Education, Health and Care Plan meetings/assessment/ annual reviews)	49.8%	103
9	Attendance and contribution to multi-agency meetings/assessment	60.9%	126
10	Other (please specify):	15.0%	31

Table 14: Identification of contribution EP respondents would like to make to their special schools

Table 14 above presents the quantitative information gathered and analysed using descriptive statistics from question 15 of the EP survey; *What would your ideal contribution look like to a special school for children and young people with profound and multiple learning difficulties?*

82.6% of EPs ideal contribution would include systemic work. Consultation, training and working with parents were the next most frequently chosen. This work too could also be seen as systemic work. Statutory work was the least identified at 49.8% of the EP respondents although this accounts for nearly half of the total respondents. Overall, the data indicated that EPs are keen to carry out a variety of different work.

Qualitative information was also provided to some of the EP respondents in the 'other' section (n = 31) and subsequently analysed using content analysis.

Some EPs highlighted that they would like to have more involvement over time, with there being an issue of follow up and time to deliver things in the most effective way (n=3). Supporting the whole school community was also discussed by several EPs (n=7), both in supporting staff through supervision and reflective groups and tracking progress. VIG was also again highlighted as an area for ideal contribution by three EPs.

What would your ideal contribution from the Educational Psychologist look like?			
Answer Choice		Response Percent	Response Total
1	Whole school/whole class work	43.2%	19
2	Individual work	65.9%	29
3	Training	63.6%	28
4	Working with parents	59.1%	26
5	Supervision	20.5%	9
6	Interventions	52.3%	23
7	Attendance and contribution to multi-agency meetings/assessment	56.8%	25
8	Not sure	6.8%	3
9	Other (please specify):	11.4%	5
10	Comments:	0.0%	0
Comments:			10

Table 15: What special schools would like to see from EP contribution?

When considering what ideal EP contribution would look like, the most frequent answer from schools was individual work (65.9%) closely followed by training (63.6%) Supervision was the least chosen at 20.5%.

Several special schools chose to provide information via the ‘other, please specify’ (n=5) and comments section (n=10). This qualitative information was thus analysed using descriptive statistics. Two schools stated that they would like to see ‘*more frequent assessments*’ and ‘*assessments of specific needs*’. Another school highlighted the need for support around specific issues experienced by their pupils. Two schools were keen for all of the above to be carried out, adding ‘*depending on the need at the time*’.

#### 4.11.2 Embracing Opportunities

This next section provides an analysis of qualitative data collected from question 18 of the EP survey *Q18 Please list up to 3 potential opportunities for Educational Psychologists to work with special schools catering for children and young people with profound and multiple learning difficulties. This could include*



*areas such as: Staff training, Systemic work (whole school/class work) Parent support/work and Transition work and question 16 of the special school survey; Q16 List up to 3 potential opportunities you believe may exist for Educational Psychologists working with special schools such as yours. This could include areas such as: Training Systemic work (whole school/whole class work) Parent support/workshops.*

As with the previous questions related to potential barriers, these questions produced qualitative data and this was analysed using both qualitative (frequency of words) and qualitative content analysis. The questions provided a vast amount of data and as such, it has been separated into headings which reflect the categories which resulted from the analysis. From the special school respondents, 39 chose to provide an answer and 6 chose to skip this question. From the EP respondents, all (n = 207) chose to provide a qualitative answer.

#### **4.11.2.1 Systemic Work (Whole School Work)**

Systemic work was presented by EPs as one of the key opportunities of work with special schools which cater for CYP with PMLD. The word 'systemic' was cited 64 times. When EPs expanded on what this would look like in practice, staff support systems, supporting systemic change through training, gaining pupil voice and perceptions, supporting the school as a whole, inputting in the curriculum and exploring school priorities were amongst some of the most popular suggestions.

Special schools also highlighted this as a potential opportunity, with several commenting on EPs having input into whole school work and inputting into the education provided (n=9). They also emphasised parent work, training and support for staff, amongst others. Whilst all of these could be argued to be systemic, they have been further categorized according to the frequency at which they were suggested and implications for practice explored.

#### **4.11.2.2 Staff Support**

Supporting staff within these special schools became an overarching theme within the qualitative data collected from both EPs (n=73) and special schools (n=10). The emotional impact on staff was acknowledged, with one EP commenting *‘working with this group of children can be very challenging emotionally I would like EPs to offer supervision for staff to provide the emotional space and containing that they may need’*.

Examples of what this support may look like, from the perspective of EPs, included staff coaching, supervision of staff, facilitating peer group supervision, reflective groups, teaching supervision skills and teaching relaxation techniques for staff and pupils. Consultations with staff and parents were also offered frequently by EPs (n=43) as an opportunity to provide support and guidance. It was suggested that problem-solving could take place within this.

An area which perhaps is more specific and tailored to the needs of PMLD special schools was suggestions around support involving bereavements and loss (n=5). This was also highlighted by special school staff in potential

opportunities (n=2). Here it was suggested by special schools that EPs could support staff working with children with *'life limiting conditions'*. Another special school staff suggested *"Support for special school communities around loss and bereavement"*. The schools also referred to support for staff more generally, which included building resilience and dealing with challenging behaviour.

#### **4.11.2.3 Parent and Family Work**

Parent and family work was again highlighted by both EPs (n = 126) and special schools (n = 14). Special schools referred to parent support and workshops, which would involve exploring issues. Training was also suggested for parents who found it difficult to manage their child's behaviour at home as well as helping them to understand their needs. One special school reflected on their ongoing parenting class that was borne out of team work with their psychology colleagues.

In regards to working parents, EPs suggested that support and engagement with parents was important. Suggestions of ways in which this support could be provided included parent drop-ins , consultations with parents and staff, parent training, the use of VIG with parents in addition to supporting staff to support parents. Areas specific to this group of CYP included support for *"parents with finding community based experiences/activities for their children"*, *"Parent support/work to look at effect on siblings of children with pmlD"* and *"Emotional management of living with PMLD - parents and siblings"*.

#### 4.11.2.4 'Giving Psychology Away'

The implementation of problem solving models was introducing problem solving models using frameworks taught in EP training was suggested by EPs (n=8); *"using frameworks such as world cafe, COMOIRA etc."* in addition to more informal problem solving techniques. Further areas of knowledge held by EPs such as attachment, thinking and metacognition, detailed functional assessment and intervention for specific needs, project based work, such as support staff deployment project using soft systems methodology, were also suggested by EPs as areas which could be disseminated to special schools.

Frequent ways of working for EPs such as person-centred planning (n=10) *"Supporting systems for participation person centred adapted approaches"* and gaining pupil voice were also highlighted as potential opportunities (n=9); *"Person-centred working - ensuring the voice of the child is heard and plans are facilitated with them and their families"*.

The use of VIG and VERP was highlighted by several EPs (N=28), with one noting 'so that individual child's needs can be understood by the network and best interventions put in place' and represents an example of utilising evidence based techniques to support schools, their staff and their community.

Links to mainstream were also highlighted as an additional opportunity (n=24); *"Links with mainstream schools and initiatives- dual placements"*, *"work around developing links with mainstream schools/including pupils in a range of opportunities in the community"* and *"Integrating best practice between*

*mainstream and special school working*". Community and outreach support - social inclusion, extra-curricular activity and links with mainstream settings (including Satellite provisions).

Curriculum support was also highlighted by EPs (n=14), with suggestions around the facilitating of sensory curriculums, support with target setting and planning appropriate interventions through individual education plans (or equivalent).

Finally, research was indicated as an area by EPs (n=9) and special schools (n=5). EPs suggested "*Research (looking at best practice/what works/effective use of resources)*", "*support school in the latest research of evidenced-based practice*". Furthermore, research was highlighted as a 'unique contribution of EPs to special schools for CYP with PMLD.

#### **4.11.2.5 Multiagency Work**

Potential opportunities for multiagency working were considered by both EPs (n=21) and special schools (n=9). It was suggested by EPs that this could take the form of contributing to multi-agency meetings, multi-agency work, joint casework and working with other professionals in an integrated team. One EP highlighted that "*Due to the nature of the children and YPs difficulties I expect there to be many service involved with the children and YP. EPs could offer support/input to multiagency meetings and when considering transition*". Special schools also emphasised this as a potential opportunity, with one school suggesting the school itself could be used as "*a base with access to other*

*professionals and a wide range of pupils and parents” in addition to the emphasis on a ‘Team approach’.*

One EP however highlighted the difficulties they had faced in the past when attempting to work in this manner; *“I would like to get involved more in working with social care and health professionals, although I have tried to do this several times in the past, it is not always successful, due to other professionals' and my own time constraints”.*

#### **4.11.2.6 Transition Work**

Within the EP responses for potential opportunities for working with special schools catering for CYP with PMLD, there was an emphasis on transition (n=44). Transition with 19+ provisions were considered alongside post-16 transition. Working with FE establishments was also highlighted to support transition out of school. Included in this was also linking to mainstream schools. One EP noted *“particularly building independence and considering post-school opportunities to contribute to society”.*

#### **4.11.2.7 Individual Work**

Both EPs (n=20) and special schools (n=8) acknowledged, to a degree, the continued importance of individual work and assessment with CYP ‘when appropriate’. The use of individual or group interventions or tailoring interventions which were deemed to be ‘evidence based’ was also suggested alongside the monitoring of these by EPs. Individual assessment and support

for children was also mentioned by special schools, in addition to the evaluation of interventions that have been implemented for a child.

#### 4.11.2.8 Training

The data analysed here was collected via question 16 of the EP survey; Q16 *Focusing on training, what training do you feel you could offer/ feel confident in delivering to special schools for children and young people with profound and multiple learning difficulties?* And question 13 of the special school survey; Q13 *Thinking of training, what training would you like an Educational Psychologist to provide?*

Focusing on training, what training do you feel you could offer/ feel confident in delivering to special schools for children and young people with profound and multiple learning difficulties?			
Answer Choice		Response Percent	Response Total
1	Curriculum based training	31.4%	65
2	Support staff training	69.6%	144
3	Whole school systemic work e.g. supervision	79.2%	164
4	Training on specific disabilities	46.9%	97
5	Other (please specify):	22.7%	47

Table 16: Areas of training EP respondents feel they can offer to PMLD special schools

When considering training the EPs felt most confident they could offer, this was whole school systemic work (79.2%) whereas 46.9% said they felt they could provide training on specific disabilities.

22.7% of EPs ( n= 47) also provided information on training in 'other', including training on the curriculum, specific areas of difficulty such as attachment or ASD

in addition to the use of techniques familiar to EPs, such as VIG and VERP. Furthermore, several EPs highlighted a role for them in training on 'psychological aspects'. Support for the school community via peer supervision models for teachers and parent workshops for parents of CYP with PMLD was also discussed. Again, several EPs made reference to a lack of confidence or knowledge in this field, with one suggesting *"I think it would be important to take a strong multi-agency approach. There are clearly highly specialist and medical needs which would fall well outside of my scope of practice and that benefit from more holistic support"*.

Training was also highlighted frequently by EPs as an opportunity in question 18; *Q18 Please list up to 3 potential opportunities for Educational Psychologists to work with special schools catering for children and young people with profound and multiple learning difficulties. This could include areas such as: Staff training, Systemic work (whole school/class work) Parent support/work and Transition work.* This data was previously highlighted and was analysed using both quantitative and qualitative content analysis.

The word 'training' itself being cited 99 times by EPs, with staff training frequently mentioned (n=59). As discussed above, this could also be categorized as support for staff in this school setting. EPs highlighted training on specific areas of need, emotional wellbeing, neuropsychology, loss and bereavement, narrative therapy and solution focused brief therapy in addition to curriculum based training. As demonstrated, many of the topics of training included specific areas related to knowledge and skill sets held specifically by EPs.



Thinking of training, what training would you like an Educational Psychologist to provide?			
Answer Choice		Response Percent	Response Total
1	Curriculum based training	29.5%	13
2	Support staff training	50.0%	22
3	Whole school systemic work e.g. supervision	43.2%	19
4	Training on specific disabilities	54.5%	24
5	Other (please specify):	20.5%	9
6	Comments:	0.0%	0
Comments:			7

Table 17: Training special schools would like to receive from EPs

When it came to considering training provided by EPs to special schools, special school staff indicated that they would like to receive training on specific disabilities (54.5%, N = 24) followed by half identifying that they would like training for support staff (N = 22). Qualitative information suggested that training on challenging behaviour was highlighted by two special school staff in addition to training specific to phases (n=2) and whole school training (n =2).

These findings were echoed in the data analysed using content analysis from question 16 of the special school survey. Training was cited 26 times by special school staff. Behaviour and mental health training were highlighted in addition to training for staff to understand pupil's behaviour including '*disruptive behaviour such as ODD*' and '*Behaviour management - in line with pupils' conditions and diagnosis*'. Again, training on these areas can be seen as providing support for staff in these areas.

## **4.12 Summary of Findings**

### **4.12.1 Actualising the 'Ideal': Carving a Role for the EP**

The data collected from this research has provided a wealth of information, from both the perspective of the EP and the special schools they support. The current picture presented demonstrates a field of EP work led by statutory work and individual work. This said, other contributions were also found, with EPs highlighting consultations, parent work and staff training. The least frequent current contribution being provided according to EPs were interventions and staff supervision. This picture is consistent with that offered by special school staff.

There does however appear to be an inconsistency as to what service schools are currently receiving from EPs. This relates to not only contact (both direct and indirect) but also the impact the schools and EPs believe they are having. Previous research has indicated individual accounts of EPs constructing and designing their own roles without apparent reference to their colleagues (Shotton, 1999 as cited in Webster, Hingley & Franey, 2000). This could go some way to explaining the variation in contributions being reported.

When asked to consider the contribution they would 'ideally' like to make, EPs focused predominantly on systemic work. This was supported in the data collected on 'potential opportunities for EP' working with these special schools. Overall, the data collected demonstrates that EPs are keen to provide a varied contribution to the schools. Both special schools and EPs acknowledged a role for the EP in supporting their school community emotionally. This could take the

form of training, supervision, parent workshops amongst others. All were popular responses from both sets of participants.

It is important to acknowledge that all this is taking place within a specific national and local context. The national shortage of EPs is widely known and acknowledged as is the pressure of statutory work within the profession. The move to traded services has resulted in some special schools buying into the service more than others. Why this is the case can be hypothesised from the results in this survey but this is likely to require further targeted research. Time is a central element to this dilemma. Previous research highlighted that special schools are often in need of focused advice and support but this often doesn't occur once the child has received a statement (DfEE, 2000). EPs want to track change and progress and follow up work, something which is shown to increase the effectiveness of input and the relationship between the EP and school, but simply lack the time in order to do it. All these factors, including the perceived and / or real EP skill set not being appropriate for the special school population, affect the potential contribution the EP is able to make to special schools such as these.

#### **4.13 Chapter Summary**

This chapter has presented the analysis of the quantitative and qualitative data collected from the EP and special school surveys. The quantitative information was analysed using descriptive statistics and the qualitative information by qualitative and quantitative content analysis. The results provided demographic information on both the EPs and special schools. The current contribution of EPs to special schools catering for CYP with PMLD was then presented,

including areas such as frequency of direct and indirect contact, the type of work being carried out, how effective this was deemed to be, as rated by special school staff and their perceived unique contribution to special schools. Whose role it was to work with special schools, as perceived by EPs and special schools was also explored. Finally, potential barriers to EP practice in these settings were highlighted and discussed followed by potential opportunities.

## **Discussion**

### **5.1 Chapter Overview**

This chapter brings together the findings from the current research, beginning with a discussion framed by the research questions (5.2. – 5.3) It then considers the impact of these findings on EP practice, allowing for exploration of these findings in relation to current literature (5.4). The strengths and limitations of the study are finally explored (5.6) in addition to implications for future research (5.7).

### **5.2 Discussion in Relation to the Research Question**

The current research set out to answer the question:

What is the current contribution of the Educational Psychologist to special schools which cater for CYP with PMLD, from the perspective of EPs and special school staff?

This generated two sub research questions in order to answer this question:

Research question 1

*What is the current contribution of Educational Psychologists to special schools which cater for CYP with PMLD from the perspective of EPs?*

Research question 2

*What is the current contribution of Educational Psychologists to special schools which cater for CYP with PMLD from the perspective of special school staff?*

**5.2.1 What is the current contribution of Educational Psychologists to special schools which cater for CYP with PMLD from the perspective of Educational Psychologists and special school staff?**

***5.2.2 What is the current contribution of Educational Psychologists to special schools which cater for CYP with PMLD from the perspective of EPs?***

From the analysis of both the quantitative data through descriptive statistics and the qualitative data through content analysis, an interesting picture of the current contribution of EPs to special schools which cater for CYP with PMLD from the perspective of the EP was gained. From the 207 EPs who responded, 75 were currently a link EP to a special school. In addition to this, 4 were directly employed by the school and 1 stated that they were seconded 1 day a week to this school. 141 (68.1%) however had previously been a link EP.

It is interesting to consider this data in relation to the visits which are currently being carried out by EPs to these special schools. The highest proportion of responses, nearly 1/3, indicated that they have carried out no scheduled visits to a PMLD special school in the academic year 2015-2016. One way of interpreting this data is that those EPs who are not currently linked to a PMLD school (63.8% of this data set) are not carrying out work in this setting as part of their work programme.

Over a quarter (29.5%, n =61) indicated that their visits varied on the needs of the school. This quantitative data was then supported by the content analysis of

the qualitative data provided by EPs. Here several EPs commented that their work within these settings was often needs led, suggesting that EPs are being responsive to the requirements of the school.

It is interesting to consider the information provided above when considering the current contribution of EPs to PMLD special schools. This data presents a picture in which many EPs are not working within these settings for at least an academic year at a time. The implications of this on practice and experience and knowledge held by the EP themselves will be explored further on in the discussion. Those who are visiting these settings indicated a variation of frequency of visits, with around 10% each providing between 3 – 11 days a year in the school, demonstrating a considerable variation between EPs and schools.

EPs provided qualitative information as to why this variation may occur. Several highlighted that it was primarily statutory work which led them to working in these settings, with reference being made to transfer reviews and statutory assessments as reasons for their work in these schools. Given the nature of statutory work, this is time limited and aimed at a specific child, as directed by the SEND CoP. As a result, it is unlikely to result in ongoing work with a CYP or the school if this is the work EPs are primarily being directed to carry out. Other EPs made reference to their time in the schools being dependent on being 'bought in' by the schools. This impact of school budgets and traded services will be discussed further on in this chapter.

The amount of indirect contact EPs were making with the PMLD special schools varied considerably from 19.3% providing between 1-2 days to 20.8% providing 11+ days of indirect contact. This demonstrates the vast range of different services being provided to special schools depending on the EP and/or the service. Again, mitigating factors such as the amount of time bought in by the school and statutory-led work could both be considered as viable variables. Additionally, those who work directly for the school or are seconded are invariably going to provide a higher proportion than those employed by the LA.

When invited to reflect on the work carried out in schools, EPs quantitative and as well as qualitative answers suggested that this was primarily statutory led work, followed by individual work. It is interesting to consider reasons for this. As discussed previously, there appears to be an ongoing emphasis on EPs working with individual children despite EPs reporting that they wish to provide more systemic work (Boyle & MacKay, 2007). Around 2/3<sup>rd</sup> of EPs indicated carrying out consultations. These can take different forms so it would be interesting to explore further whether these took place as part of the statutory work carried out or were purely consultations.

Furthermore, the impact of the SEND CoP, introduced in September 2014 cannot be ignored. This has led to a statutory requirement for all statements held by CYP to be transferred to EHCPs. This is inevitably going to impact on the type of work EPs carry out in these settings, where every CYP is required to have an EHCP.



Interventions and staff supervision were the least frequent contribution to PMLD special schools, as indicated by the EP respondents. Again, it is important to consider this in the context of previous data provided by EPs on their visits to these special schools. Interventions are likely to be ongoing pieces of work as opposed to one-off visits. Interestingly, some EPs commented that they had carried out project work with the school and work with the governing body which requires sustained input. It would be interesting to explore the context in which this took place.

Just over half noted attending multidisciplinary meetings as part of their contribution to these settings. Joint work with other professionals was also commented on by EPs in addition to specific pieces of work. It is interesting to consider this alongside what they proclaimed to be their ideal contribution to this setting. Here, EPs chose systemic work, and additional work which could also be considered systemic; training, working with parents and consultations.

### **5.2.3 What is the current contribution of Educational Psychologists to special schools which cater for CYP with PMLD from the perspective of special school staff?**

Quantitative and qualitative analysis again provided an interesting picture of the current contribution of EPs to special schools which cater for CYP with PMLD from the perspective of special school staff.

When considering the data provided by the special schools, it is important to bear in mind that 44 special school staff provided responses, 38 of which were

from LA maintained schools. Additionally, 2/3<sup>rd</sup> of the respondents were senior management within the special school. The data showed that approximately 2/3<sup>rd</sup> of the schools said they have a named EP with an additional 8 schools saying they contact the LA if they require an EP. Two schools said they pay for an EP if they need it or employ their own EP.

The amount of contact the respondents within the school had with an EP had varied almost equally between none, limited and moderate contact. 1/3 of the schools reported having their school visited between 3 – 10 days a year. Only 1 school reported receiving 11 or more visits per year. As per the information provided by the EPs, a large proportion of schools reported that their visits varied depending on the needs of the school. Interestingly, 3 schools reported not having been visited for a year. This creates a varied picture of the visits and thus direct contact special schools and EPs are currently having. This data suggests that visits from the EP are not necessarily standard practice, with some schools missing out completely.

Consistent with the EP responses, special schools reported that statutory work and individual work were the most common work carried out by EPs in their special school. They also acknowledged EPs attendance to multiagency meetings. The least frequent work was supervision of staff followed by transition work for older student and whole school work.

Further to this, the schools were able to provide additional information which created a richer picture of the work carried out by EPs in these settings. This

ranged from individual consultations around specific students to input into the schools research projects. Interestingly 5 schools indicated that no work had been carried out, to their knowledge. Again, the contribution EPs are currently making to these special schools, from the perspective of their staff, varied greatly.

When considering the current contribution of EPs to PMLD special schools, it is interesting to explore how effective the involvement of the EP is considered to be from the perspective of special school staff. As noted in the analysis of results, there was almost an equal report of effectiveness between none, some, moderate or considerable effectiveness. Information provided by the schools provided some further context. Those schools who reported none or some impact reported that the EP did not bring any new thinking, others emphasised the focus on statutory work. Lack of time to get to know the students was also highlighted. Those who reported moderate or considerable effectiveness of the involvement made reference to ongoing, sustained work and the direct impact this involvement had on staff and practice. This is vital information when considering the impact of this research on future practice of EPs in these special schools and will be explored in more depth later in the chapter.

Another way to consider the current contribution is to consider the impact that the EP makes through their involvement. Special schools were asked to consider this in relation to recommendations EPs made in their reports; a common way for EPs to report on their involvement with a CYP or the school. Schools reported varied impact of these recommendations on their practice with some noting that this question was not applicable. This could be because the schools had not worked with an EP (as reported in response to a previous

question) or that they had worked with them in such a way that a report was not produced. No qualitative information was provided by the special schools for this question so they are hypotheses related to the data collected.

Finally, special schools were asked to consider what they believed to be the unique contribution of the EP to a special school such as theirs. This question was placed in the context that PMLD special schools are highly likely to work with a variety of different professionals, given the complex needs of their CYP (Male & Rayner, 2007). This is also interesting to consider in the context of the Farrell report (2006), which explored work carried out that required an EP or could be fulfilled by another professional. Overall in this report, it was found that special schools cited distinctive contribution of EPs within SEN work.

One area of unique contribution highlighted was in regards to challenging behaviour presented by the CYP within their setting. This relates back to the literature discussed in the introduction which explored the relatively high incidence of challenging behaviour in students with PMLD.

Support for staff and parent work was also highlighted through specialist advice they were able to provide. This is interesting considering that this type of work was less common than statutory and individual work. This is consistent however with areas considered for opportunities for EPs in these settings and will be explored further later.

Schools also recognised the contribution of EPs in their settings in relation to their evidence based practice and knowledge of current research, with suggestions that EPs are able to provide a 'deeper understanding' from

someone outside of the main school setting. This data is interesting to consider alongside that found in the Farrell report, in which 2/3 of special schools made reference to individual work (Farrell et al, 2006).

Not all schools were able to make reference to what they believed was the unique contribution of the EP to their setting, indicating potentially a varying experience of EP input or perception of the contribution the EP has made to their school. Again, the requirement for EPs to be involved in the statutory process was referenced but their limited involvement outside of this, unlike other professionals such as OTs and Physiotherapists was noted.

### **5.3 Understanding the Current Picture**

Both EPs and special school staff were asked to consider potential barriers that may exist to EPs working with special schools such as these. The information given has provided potential hypotheses for the current picture presented above. These hypotheses will be explored below.

The emphasis on the EP role in statutory work was highlighted by both EPs and special school staff when considering their current contribution to PMLD special schools. It was suggested that this would often be the only work carried out in these settings by EPs and special schools noted how the nature of this work influenced how the impact and effectiveness of their contribution was perceived by special school staff. It is likely that this high frequency of statutory based work in these schools will undoubtedly affect how the role of the EP is perceived by special schools such as these. Lack of understanding of the role of the EP

was another common theme highlighted by EPs when considering potential barriers to working in these settings alongside when considering their relationship with their PMLD special schools. One EP commented *'I feel there is, or has been, a difference of opinion between what we offer and what the school think or hope we offer! We have tried to address this but it can be difficult to change perceptions'*.

This difference in perceptions of the EP role is something which has been written about extensively and appears to continue. The requirement for EPs to be involved in all statutory work related to EHCPs alongside the national shortage of EPs affecting the ability to carry out additional work, is only likely to continue to perpetuate this idea that this is the main role of the EP as it acts to restrict the time available for EPs to have contact with special schools but also to an extent, dictates the type of work which is carried out. In addition to this, this work is by its very nature individual. This again could act to sustain this perception that EPs carry out this type of work.

Time emerged as central to everything and this was impacted by and on so many things. Again considering the national context, schools reported a reduced budget which impacts on their ability to 'buy in' other professionals. In this research, the majority of the schools were LA maintained which means that they will be provided with an EP service from the LA. The extent of this service however varied considerably, as demonstrated by the data. Those EP services which were traded noted how their ability to carry out work in these settings was reliant on the schools buying their time. The perception of the EP role outside of

statutory work, which is provided by the LA, could potentially influence special school's decision whether or not to buy in the EP service.

As the results showed, there were many factors at play which could be contributing to the current contribution EPs are making to special schools. The impact that this has for EP practice and potential ways in which the situation can be moved forward will be discussed in the next section.

## **5.4 Implications for EP practice**

### **5.4.1 The Importance of Building Relationships**

Relationships, it appears, are central when considering the contribution of the EP to special schools which cater for CYP with PMLD. As one EP noted when considering their relationship with their special school *'It has taken some years to nurture the relationship with the EPS, who this year offered free work to demonstrate other ways of working'* (EP relationship with special school rated as poor). The relationship between the EP and special school appeared to be influenced by factors such as: the duration of the relationship between the EP and special school, the frequency that the EP has contact and access to the special school, the perceived impact and value of the work of the EP and the perceived understanding of the EP role by the special school.

As noted above, one commonality between these themes highlighted from the qualitative content analysis was time. Time appears to be a consistent theme amongst professionals working in these settings (Wright & Kersner, 1999). In

order for the input of the EP to be valued and to develop an understanding of the EP role, the investment of time appears integral. This means time has to be dedicated to this area of work. Farrell suggests that the shortage of EPs will inevitably impact upon the perception that teachers have of EPs value and contribution (Farrell et al, 2006).

When considering this finding from a theoretical perspective, Allport's Contact Hypothesis provides potential understanding (Allport, 1954). Also known as the Intergroup Contact Theory, it is suggested that given the right conditions, interpersonal contact and the opportunity to communicate with others can lead to understanding and appreciating different points of views, thus a new appreciation and understanding is created. This theory suggests criteria which facilitates and this includes equal status, common goals, personal interaction and intergroup cooperation. As such, this suggest that additional skills on the part of the EP and special school are likely to be utilised in order to create this relationship. Gillman and Medway (2007) also make reference to the contact hypothesis to explain, in part, why special education teachers held differing views of school psychologists compared to regular education teachers who had less contact with them.

Active and constructive responses, as suggested by Seligman, are said to improve the quality of communication between members in the relationship and as a result, the gratitude expressed between the members (Seligman, 2011). As suggested by the analysis of results in this study, communication was an area highlighted by both EPs and special schools as an area for potential barriers to



EPs working with special schools. Whilst one must be careful not to assume beyond what the data reveals, the current analysis does suggest some interesting context to the findings of this research.

Farrell points out that EPs should be explicit about the nature of the distinctive contribution they can make and conversely, those who commission their work should be clear about their expectations from the EP service (Farrell, 2009). When clarity of aims, requirements, processes and outcomes are achieved, this is said to lead to greater commonality of purpose and other professionals feeling more committed and enthused to work with the EP (Farrell et al, 2006 as cited in Farrell, 2009; Wagner, 2000).

#### **5.4.2 Is Further Training of EPs Required?**

A substantial number of EPs highlighted their lack of knowledge or skills in the area of PMLD. Lunt and Majors (2000), considered the varied practice amongst EPs and questioned the existence or validity of a core knowledge base of EPs. Currently, those applying for the EP training courses must have a minimum of 1 year full-time experience of working with children and young people within education, health, social care, youth justice or a childcare or community setting (Gov.uk/educational-psychology). As a result, those coming into the EP profession represent a varied skill set with differing previous knowledge and experience. Moreover, a recent review of EP and clinical psychologist training noted that information on course content was described differently by each university making direct comparison difficult (DH & DfE, 2016)

In its Standards of proficiency for practitioner psychologists (HCPC, 2015), the HCPC (as the regulatory organisation for EPs) currently requires EPs to have understanding of psychological theories and research evidence in child, adolescent and young adult development relevant to educational psychology. Whilst it does not make specific reference to understanding of those with PMLD or severe and complex needs, the HCPC does however require the 'understanding of role of the practitioner psychologist across a range of settings and services' which could be taken to include specialist settings which cater for these needs (op cit. p13). What each university offering the Doctoral programme choose to include in their programme of study and thus deliver to their trainees, is however, likely to vary depending on those devising the curriculum. Furthermore, considering the variation in service delivery between EP services and even individuals within the same team (Lunt & Majors, 2000), opportunities provided on placement, an integral and compulsory part of their training programme, is also likely to differ.

Alongside this, there was also acknowledgement that EPs lack confidence working in these special schools. Special schools also reported a lack of confidence in the knowledge of EPs in PMLD, with both making reference to the experience and knowledge which already exists within the school. This is consistent with Kelly & Gray (2000) who noted that special school staff often feel that their own staff have more specialist knowledge than individual EPs about particular types of special needs because they engage with them on a daily basis (DfEE, 2000).

It was also reported that special schools want more specialist advice in order to enable them to function in an effective way, with the suggestion that EPs need

to develop a particular specialism to be used as a source of knowledge or expertise when working with children with the most severe and complex needs (DfEE, 2000; Farrell et al, 2006). Of those EPs who responded to this survey, 18 EPs (8.7%) identified as having a specialism in the area of PMLD. It is important to consider this in relation to those who chose to respond to the survey. That said, it is a relatively small number and one of the less common areas of specialism of those who responded. One suggestion as a result of this research could be for the need for further training in the area of PMLD for qualified EPs. It is possible that increased knowledge in this area could improve their confidence in working in these settings. Furthermore, one EP suggested the need for input on the Doctoral training course in the area of PMLD.

This opens up an interesting discussion. Lunt and Majors (2000) in their paper, 'The Professionalisation of Educational Psychology' consider definition of knowledge, in particular professional knowledge. They highlighted the desire of EPs to attend training in specific difficulties, such as ADHD, in order to develop their knowledge. Realistically however there will be a limit to the knowledge an EP can acquire. This is considered in the context of the wide diversity of difficulties EPs are encountering in every day practice and given the constraints of practice in a statutory-led system. It is an impossibility to expect each EP to be expert in all fields of child development.

If, as it appears from this research that, at least from an EP perspective, all EPs are to contribute to working in PMLD special schools, perhaps it is a question of redefining what 'knowledge' it is that the EP is bringing. As Lunt and Majors (2000) highlight, EPs are often brought in at a time when the school-based

strategies cease to be effective and the EP is required to use psychological intervention to complement education. The EP can utilise their tools to clarify often 'messy problems' and develop supportive systems around the child. These other areas of strength or skills and abilities which can be used in these settings, without requiring in depth knowledge of PMLD, in line with the discussion above, and uncovered in this research will be further explored below.

#### **5.4.3 Finding a Niche**

An interesting observation from the qualitative data collected during this research is that although EPs felt that the school did not understand their role and what they could offer, it also became clear from the qualitative information provided by EPs that they too were not entirely sure what their role was or what they could offer to a PMLD special school. The debate around the role of the EP is ongoing, 'we know that educational psychologists have long had at least an awareness of the lack of clarity that exists about their role' (Gibbs, 1998, p19 as cited in Boyle & Lauchlan, 2009). Farrell suggests that one key challenge for the EP profession is to overcome 'some of the feelings of insecurity and self-doubt which are reflected in some of the literature' (Farrell, 2009, p74).

Questions relating to the distinction of the EP role have been asked for many years, and again in this current research. Farrell (2009) argues that given the contexts in which they work and the fact that other professionals also work in such contexts, this question is inevitable and that too, this question is asked of other professional groups. Farrell et al (2006) found that when asked about the perceived uniqueness of the EP contribution within SEN work, many who

responded, including the EPs themselves felt that the work they carried out could have been met by other professionals. School staff were most likely to name SENCOs or specialist teachers whilst EPs favoured clinical psychologists as alternatives. Indeed a jointly commissioned review of the clinical and educational psychology training arrangements in England in November 2014 identified 'issues and challenges' facing the professions which included 'reported confusion around the roles and responsibilities of clinical and EPs...especially in schools, affecting service user experience' (DH & DfE, 2016, p6).

It was found that the training received by EPs and clinical psychologists showed limited common ground, apart from general ways found in other programmes. Indeed, EP programmes were found to have more child and education based modules that did not appear at all in the clinical psychology programme. This suggests therefore that there is a qualitative difference between these professionals (op. cite). Similarly, The HCPC highlights the different skill sets. EPs, unlike clinical psychologists, are required to understand the educational and emotional factors that enable or hinder the provision of effective teaching and learning, psychological models related to the influence of school ethos and culture and the curriculum in addition to psychological models or factors which contribute to underachievement and disengagement with education (HCPC, 2010, p16). As Boyle and Lauchlan (2009) highlight, 'EPs have an evidential base to their practice that underpins their unique position in the education system' (p79).

Thus, again this leads on to the importance of the EP focusing on what skills and knowledge they already possess which can then be used to help special schools to function in the 'most effective way' and communicating this successfully. After all, it appears to be this in depth training that schools acknowledge to be the unique contribution of the EP (Farrell et al., 2006).

#### **5.4.3.1 Challenging Behaviour**

One area emphasised by special schools was a role for EPs in supporting them with CYP who present with challenging behaviour. This was highlighted by several special schools as EPs 'unique contribution'. Here, schools made reference to challenges '*beyond the expertise of the school*' and '*giving insight and deeper understanding of pupil's behaviour*'. This was also highlighted by special schools in the potential opportunities for EPs in these settings. This is consistent with Farrell et al. (2006) who recorded special schools reflections on consultations with EPs around behaviour management strategies for children with emotional needs, managing challenging behaviour with children with complex difficulties. Martin and Alborz (2014) highlighted that training for teaching assistants working with CYP with PIMD focused primarily on behavioural interventions rather than an in-depth understanding of the complex factors which contribute to the emergence of challenging behaviour.

As previously discussed, a sizeable amount of research in the area of PMLD has been carried out on the challenging behaviour which is often presented by CYP with PMLD (Poppes et al., 2010). Whilst previous research has made reference to the support of EPs with CYP with PMLD who exhibit challenging

behaviour, research specifically in this area does not currently exist. This points to an interesting role for the EP in supporting special schools with strategies and psychological understanding of what may be driving this behaviour. As highlighted by Boyle and Lauchlan (2007) the strength of the profession is said to be grounded in the theoretical principles of psychology which is then applied by EPs in the field of psychology using evidence based practice. Miller and Black (2001) note that home school interventions, mediated by EPs, in regards to behaviour have evolved from purely behavioural approaches, in the form of rewards and sanctions, to consider a range of paradigms including hard and soft systems, consultations, ecosystemic and psychodynamic understanding. Moreover they emphasise the move towards ecosystemic explanations, solution-focused practice and consultation as providing 'theoretical rationale to guiding EP practice' (p247).

In their research, Miller and Black demonstrated that EPs, acting as external consultants in schools, could facilitate understanding of challenging behaviour presented by students through the use of real life vignettes. EPs involvement and type of intervention would have to be negotiated, often acting as mediator between stakeholders such as parents and teachers (Miller & Black, 2001).

Squires (2010) argued that EPs are well placed to deliver therapeutic interventions in school, citing various skills such as the ability to build capacity through working alongside adults, understanding the needs of CYP and educational settings in addition to the ability to work flexibly by delivering casework not just through direct work but also consultation (Squires, 2010 as cited in Atkinson et al, 2012). Atkinson et al (2012) however highlight the

barriers (as highlighted by EPs) in carrying out individual therapeutic work. Those ranked as most important included limitations of service time allocation model, service capacity and other priorities being identified via stakeholders. These constraints are consistent with those highlighted in the current research.

#### **5.4.3.2 Supporting the Emotional Wellbeing of the School Community**

As highlighted in previous literature, there are significant emotional pressures associated with working with CYP with PMLD. As above, this is related to the relatively high occurrence of challenging behaviour and reduced communication and interaction (Ware, 1996 as cited in Ware, 2004; Kiernan & Kiernan, 2004). As a result, it has been suggested that EPs are well placed to support staff in these settings as they possess skills in facilitation, mediation and problem solving which assist in working reflectively and improving practice (Farrell et al, 2006; Dunsmuir & Leadbetter, 2010).

Whilst neither EPs nor special school staff placed supervision as particularly high on their 'ideal contribution' to PMLD special schools, the area of supporting staff within the setting was extremely common. It was consistently mentioned by both EPs and special school staff as potential opportunities for EPs. One reason could be that this support for school staff can be provided in many ways, not just in terms of supervision. Whilst special schools generally mentioned 'support for staff', EPs provided suggestions such as peer supervision models, solution circles and other support frameworks. This is consistent with Farrell et



al (2006) and Dunsmuir and Leadbetter (2010) above as these involve reflective practice and problem solving skills in order to emotionally support staff.

Another avenue highlighted by both schools and EPs was a role in supporting parents of CYP with PMLD. Again, this was consistently stated by EPs in addition to special school staff. This is in line with the DfEE (2000) report which stated that the special schools valued, and indeed wanted more time, for the EPs to support the parents of the children in their school. Previous research has also suggested that when EPs are deployed to work directly with families, they can help parents understand their child's needs and guide them in the support required to help the child fulfil their potential (DfE, 2011).

EPs, as well as supporting the emotional wellbeing of special school staff, talked of 'parent training' and 'parent workshops'. The emphasis here, as with the school staff, appears to be on facilitation of these groups. It has been suggested that EPs interpersonal and problem-solving skills may often be required in order to facilitate understanding and to encourage collaboration (Lunt & Majors, 2000). In these contexts, EPs have the potential to use the principles of process consultation, aiming to empower the problem owner and seek solutions to improve outcomes (Wagner, 2000). This is said to represent the indirect application of psychology by EPs and effective applied psychology. Moreover, in line with the HCPC standards of proficiencies identified for EPs (HCPC, 2015), they must understand theories and evidence underlying interventions for not only CYP but also their parents or carers. Furthermore, they are expected to understand psychological models related to the influence

on development of CYP from family structures and processes. This knowledge and understanding, it could be argued, makes them well placed to carry out such work.

#### **5.4.3.3 Training**

Training was highlighted by both EPs and special schools as an important contribution of the EP to these settings. This provides the EP with the opportunity to support the special schools systemically which rated highly on their 'ideal contribution'. Interestingly Kelly and Gray (2000) noted that special schools wanted more in-service training with priorities including behaviour management and counselling, developing teachers' skills, and training staff to deal with children with more complex special needs. In this research, challenging behaviour was also frequently highlighted by schools. Training on specific disabilities was also the most requested training when asked what they would like to receive from their EP.

As discussed previously, EPs, with knowledge of a wide variety of disabilities and professional practice, may be well placed to provide training when the capacity is not available within the schools (Farrell et al, 2006). Training is an effective way to not only disseminate knowledge but also support schools. As such, all of the areas discussed in this chapter; gaining the voice of the child, supporting the emotional needs of the school community and challenging behaviour; sharing techniques, tools and psychological underpinning to practice, could begin to be addressed in this manner.

## **5.5 Summary: Knowing your own worth**

The areas highlighted above reflect the skills and knowledge possessed by EPs; their unique contribution. Special schools recognised that EPs have evidence based knowledge and current research drives their practice. EPs themselves highlighted the role of psychological understanding and tools which can be used to support schools, specific to the role of the EP. The application of psychological theory thus presents itself as the EPs 'value added'. Whilst many EPs argued that they did not feel the special school staff understood their role, many of the EPs who responded also showed uncertainty about what they had to offer in these settings, above and beyond that of special school staff. Indeed, Lunt and Majors (2000) highlight that EPs do, to some extent, perpetuate a confusion over their role. It could therefore be argued that it is important that in order to move this forward, EPs need to be sure about their 'own worth' and confident in the skills and knowledge they are bringing to these special schools.

## **5.6 Strengths and limitations of Current Research**

### **5.6.1 Strengths**

When considering the implications of the current research, it is important to acknowledge both the strengths and limitations of the research. One of the clear strengths of the research is the sample size. 207 EPs and 44 special school staff provided responses to the survey. These participants were from all across England, almost equally in the North, South, East and West. In regards to the EP responses, there was a range of EPs who responded, from current trainee

EPs to principal EPs in Local Authorities and independent EPs in private practice.

## **5.6.2 Limitations (Including Practical Issues in Research)**

### **5.6.2.1 Response Rate**

In regards to special schools, the response rate was low, which resulted in a smaller set of data presenting potential challenges related to a representative data for the population investigated. Despite further individualising contact to each special school in an attempt to increase response rate, there was a significantly larger response (4 times) from EPs than special school staff.

### **5.6.2.2 Incomplete data**

In total, 74 EPs did not complete the survey out of 281 in total (207 did). This equates to a quarter of those who received and viewed the survey. In regards to the special school recipients, 11 did not complete the survey out of a total 55 (44 did). This equates to one fifth of the total participants.

There are several hypotheses as to why this may have occurred. This may have been due to time available to complete the survey. Although the survey only took on average approximately 10 minutes, those participants who did not complete the survey may not have had time to do so. Moreover, it is possible that they felt that the survey was not relevant to their practice and thus they could not contribute. It is true that there was no option for EPs to indicate that they did not work in a PMLD school.

### **5.6.2.3 Participants**

The main respondents from special schools for CYP with PMLD were senior management staff. There were no responses from support staff such as teaching assistants and pastoral staff. Moreover, the majority of the schools who responded were LA maintained. This is important to bear in mind when interpreting the results. In spite of these limitations, this research was successful in capturing the perceptions of both EPs and special schools regarding the current contribution of EPs to special schools which cater for CYP with PMLD; something no previous research has achieved.

### **5.6.2.4 Distribution of Survey**

One potential reason for reduced number of responses from special schools may have been a result of logistical difficulties at the beginning of the research. When the initial surveys were distributed via smart survey, difficulties accessing the link were experienced by recipients. As such, the survey link was subsequently sent out again via the authors' university email a week later. It is likely however that this initial technical difficulty resulted in a loss of some respondents, despite the author acknowledging this error in the follow up email, and those following this.

When considering the demographic of respondents, particularly in the case of special school staff, it is also important to explore how the survey was distributed. Special schools were contacted via their school email address, addressed to the head teacher who was then asked to disseminate the email to their staff team. It was found that no pastoral and/or support staff responded to

the survey and a low percentage of teachers. It is possible that these staff members did not have access to email and/or did not receive the survey link from their head teacher. Further research could act to target this group more specifically through postal questionnaires or school visits, although this has resource implications. One of the areas of interest in PMLD settings is the training of support staff and this is something which could be considered in more depth by further research.

#### **5.6.2.5 Survey Questions**

The survey which was created for EPs and special school staff was extensively checked and piloted by both EPs and special school staff. Despite this however, there were some issues. Some participants reported finding a lack of consistency in requests for historical and current information. A further question for EPs asked if they were a 'link' EP (main point of contact). This could be seen as a narrow range and instead could have also included; *'have you carried out work in a special school for CYP with PMLD – yes, a one off piece of work, several pieces of work, ongoing work etc.'* This may have resulted in capturing further additional information related to those who are not in regular contact with their special school completing the survey.

On reflection, many of the questions included in the survey were aimed at those who had previous experience in the role of the EP in this specialist setting. There was often no option to indicate that the question was 'not applicable', forcing an answer from the participant. Future surveys of this type could include *'if no to questions 7&8, please skip to question 15'* in an attempt to reduce participant drop out.

Some of the data collected therefore had to be considered carefully so as to provide context. This included the question which requested EPs specialisms, relating to specific given 'specialist EP' title which exists in some LAs. When one considers the variety of specialisms and large number of areas included as specialisms provided by EPs, it is possible that the EPs were referring to not only given titles by their service but also attributing specialisms they considered themselves to hold. This could be due to additional training in this area, previous experience prior to practicing as an EP or a 'special interest' in this area. Here, context when considering the data is very important. As highlighted earlier in the research, data is read and made sense by others, and they proceed by references of their own (Krippendorff, 2013). This is vital to consider when attempting to correctly interpret and make conclusions from the data presented.

#### **5.6.2.6 Demographic of Special Schools**

Two EPs also noted that the schools they worked in were both SLD and PMLD schools so it was hard to separate out the time. Two EPs noted "*special schools do not always define themselves as a PMLD special school. Many have now amalgamated MLD/ SLD and PMLD provision into one school*" and "*The schools I work in have both PMLD and SLD so this is difficult to separate out*". This is something which was highlighted in the initial literature related to the schooling and special school placement of students with PMLD. As was noted in the methodology section of this research, the initial search began for PMLD schools on government websites. This was quickly expanded to schools 'which

catered for children with PMLD' as it was found that many schools which classified the primary need of their students as 'SLD' also catered for children with PMLD. This was either as part of the class with children with various needs or a separate class for children with PMLD.

#### **5.6.2.7 Demand Characteristics**

Demand Characteristics relates to cues in an experiment which indicate to the participants what behaviour is expected of them. It is said that bias due to demand characteristics occur because subjects know that they are taking part in an experiment and know that certain things are expected or demanded of them (Orne, 1962 as cited in Robson, 2002).

Weber and Cook (1972) highlighted some demand characteristics that involved participants taking on roles that then decided their contribution to the experiment. These roles include the 'good participant' who attempts to identify the experimenter's hypothesis and confirm it; the 'negative participant' who will also attempt to identify the hypothesis in an effort to destroy the reliability of the study; the 'faithful participant' who faithfully follows what is asked of them by the researcher and the 'apprehensive participant' who feels the need to behave in 'a socially acceptable way' due to concerns about how their responses are going to be interpreted.

This was important for the current researcher to hold in mind when creating the survey to avoid leading the participants in any way. This will be explored further in the reflexivity section. Additionally, the participants were informed at the



beginning of the research of their right to withdraw and that participation was anonymous.

#### **5.6.2.8 Researcher's Agenda**

It is possible that the researcher's presence in the content analysis impacted on the categorisation of the data. As highlighted in 'researcher position' in the introduction, Krippendorff argues that the content analysts' interest and theoretical participation in what their analysis reveals must be acknowledged (Krippendorff, 2013). As such, the author ensured that the content analysis conducted, both qualitatively and quantitatively, was explicit and the categories were exhaustive. When a category could not be created for a qualitative purpose, 'other' was used to ensure this data was not lost.

### **5.7 Implications for Future Research**

#### **5.7.1 The use of Video Interactive Guidance in PMLD special schools**

One interesting opportunity highlighted by EPs was the current and potential use of VIG in PMLD settings. The use of video analysis is often used in PMLD settings to evidence pupil's progress and provide feedback to colleagues.

Previous research has explored the use of video analysis in supporting teachers working with pre-verbal pupils, proving a useful method for understanding subtle signs of communication (Anderson, 2008). VIG is an intervention in which a practitioner uses video clips of authentic situations to enhance communication

within relationships (AVIGuk, 2017). It has a developing evidence base and has begun to be used in EP practice and by other health and social professionals.

The impact of reduced communication and interaction by CYP with PMLD and the emotional impact on those who support them has been documented (Ware, 1996; Kiernan & Kiernan, 2004). As noted in the literature review, this alongside complex medical needs can result in challenging behaviour. It would be of interest if VIG could be used to improve understanding of communication within these settings and the impact this may have on reducing incidences of challenging behaviour; an area highlighted by special schools for additional support. It could also be used to explore how challenging behaviour was managed to influence practice of school staff.

### **5.7.2 The use of Video Enhanced Reflective Practice (VERP) in PMLD special schools to support school staff**

Another area of opportunity and current practice raised by EPs was the use of VERP. When used as a tool for reflection on practice, VERP is said to promote critical analysis, problem solving, creative thinking in addition to attuned communication and relationships (Glen Strathie Partnership, 2017).

Interestingly, those are skills that have been highlighted as being possessed by EPs (Farrell et al, 2006; Dunsmuir & Leadbetter, 2010). Given the emotional nature of working in special schools which cater for PMLD, as highlighted by several EPs and special schools in this research, and the acknowledgement for a role in the EP supporting this, it would be of interest to see if this could be achieved successfully through the use of VERP.

### **5.7.3 Needs of Support Staff in PMLD Schools**

One of the areas of interest highlighted in the introduction was the role of the support staff in working with CYP with PMLD. (Aires, 2000; Simon & Bayliss, 2007). In their study, Martin and Alborz (2014) note the 'vital role' support staff play in the education of pupils with complex learning needs, often without direct supervision of teachers. Given the demographic of those from special schools who responded to this research (primarily senior management staff), it would be of interest to carry out further research into the professional and personal developmental needs of support staff who work with CYP with PMLD and the potential role of the EP.

### **5.7.4 The role of the EP in Supporting Mainstream Settings which Cater for CYP with PMLD**

Interestingly, this research did not place a strong emphasis for EP input on the curriculum being provided for CYP with PMLD within special school settings. Both EPs and special schools rated this as one of the lowest areas of training they wished to provide and receive. It would be interesting to see if this was found in mainstream school settings. Previous research, in line with the findings here with special schools, has suggested that mainstream schools may require support when managing challenging behaviour (Broomhead, 2013). What, if any, areas of support mainstream schools may require from an EP when supporting a CYP with PMLD would be interesting to explore.

### **5.7.5 Gaining the Voice of CYP with PMLD**

One area highlighted by EPs in regards to their current and potential contribution was gaining the voice of the CYP with PMLD. CYP with PMLD have very limited use of language in any form; be it spoken, signing or use of symbols. As such, they are more likely to communicate at an earlier stage level using actions, sounds, facial expressions and reflex responses (Ware, 1997 as cited in Porter, Ouvry, Morgan & Downs, 2001). The very limited research that the author found in this area (Barton, 2015) suggests that the views of the children with PMLD can be gained through the use of pictorial information, alongside limited choices.

Given the statutory role of the EP in providing advice for EHCPs, they are well placed to gain the views of the CYP. They also, as part of the process, have access to and work with the school and family. As reported in Porter et al (2001), the interpretation of communication can vary between these groups. It would be of interest to explore further how the role of the EP in capturing and bringing together the views of the families in order to support gaining the voice of the CYP with PMLD can be achieved and actioned in practice.

## **5.8 Reflexivity**

Reflexivity is an important part in capturing the researcher's journey and the position of the researcher during the research process. Critical reflection helps the researcher to explore and develop an understanding of what they bring to the research and how they influence it. Being reflexive is therefore more than being reflective. It requires critical self-reflection of the ways in which the

researcher's personality, personal assumptions, beliefs and values can impact on the research process, in particular how data is collected and analysed (Lipson, 1991).

It is stated that 'a researcher's background and position will affect what they choose to investigate, the angle of investigation, the methods judged most adequate for this purpose, the findings considered most appropriate, and the framing and communication of conclusion' (Malterud, 2001, p. 483-484). It is vital therefore when conducting qualitative research as it allows the identification of potential researcher bias (Robson, 2002).

### **5.8.1 Reflexive Diary**

One way in which to foster reflexivity in qualitative research is to keep a reflexive diary. I completed this throughout the research process. This allowed me to document the decisions made from methodological decisions and the reasons for them; logistical issues (which are included in the limitations above) and how these were overcome, in addition to how the findings sat with my own values and interests.

### **5.8.2 The Role of the Researcher**

Another important part of reflexivity in research is to consider any preconceptions and belief systems which may be held by the researcher in addition to any assumptions they may make.

The role of supervision during the process of research was an important part of identifying any potential researcher bias. When discussing my motivation for

carrying out this research, it became clear that this was borne out of my personal experience of working in specialist settings. I had considerable experience of working with this demographic and felt very passionately about the input they receive. I also was influenced by reports from other professionals in regards to difficult working relationships with special schools.

As such, when the survey was initially drafted by the researcher, several questions were included which, on reflection, were influenced by my assumptions and beliefs. This included asking questions I personally wanted answering, influenced by my belief system around those who have experience working in these settings. Not only could this have created leading questions, affecting the validity of the survey but also provide information which did not directly answer the research questions. The use of an expert jury to create the survey in addition to a pilot study also helped to avoid any additional potential biases.

### **5.8.3 Reflections on the Research Journey**

As this represents my first piece of large scale research, much learning has taken place as a result of conducting it. The process of choosing a research topic in itself helped to define my current professional special interest. I began the research with the idea of interviewing individual special schools on the same topic within my LA. When I reflected on what I wished to achieve as a result of the research however, part through the use of the reflective diary (noted above) and tutorial with my academic and professional tutor, I came to the realisation that I wished to gain a national picture of what EPs were currently providing to special schools catering for CYP with PMLD.

Whilst no research having been done in this area was initially daunting, it emphasised the need for the research to take place. Having carried out the research and analysed the data, I believe I have learned so much about the profession I am aiming to join and the context within which I will be working. The research has provided insight into practice and potentially important information to shape future practice. I feel a sense of pride at having collected this information. I hope to use this information not only to disseminate to other professionals but also inform my own practice when working in these settings going forward.

## **5.9 Summary of Chapter**

This chapter has outlined the research data collected in line with the research questions posed. An attempt to understand the current picture, as presented by the data was then explored. Implications for EP practice was then highlighted and this was discussed within the context of EPs finding their 'niche' or value added within this specialist setting. Strengths and limitations for the research were discussed before considering implications for future research.

## **5.10 Conclusions**

The EP profession is said to find it difficult in finding confidence in its role and contribution (Lunt & Majors, 2000). In this research, EPs communicated that they felt deskilled and lacking in knowledge in this specialist setting, often considering what their value added was above and beyond the school staff and other professionals involved. Special schools also indicated a lack of knowledge

on PMLD on the part of the EP. The study by Webster, Hingley and Franey, (2000) highlighted two strands considered to be important in professionalisation, defined as 'the process by which a semi-professional increasingly meets the alleged criteria of a full profession' (Hoyle & John, 1995 as cited in Webster, Hingley & Franey, 2000). These included firstly strengthening status aspects and secondly, improving quality of services to clients through enhancing the skills and knowledge of practitioners. It is suggested that the first leads to the second; that the value of a profession is inevitably judged by clients in terms of the service they receive.

As can be seen in this research, the contribution of the EP service is unavoidably being judged by special schools on previous past experiences. Suggestions of improving skills and knowledge in this area, with some EPs proposing more input at initial doctoral training stages as going some way to achieve this. Despite calls for EPs to remain involved with CYP with severe and complex needs, this research suggests that this often is not possible (DfES, 1998; Farrell et al, 2006).

Opportunities however appear to lie in the additional skills and knowledge that are very specific to the role of an EP. Whilst the application of psychology is a core skill of any EP working in mainstream or specialist settings, it seems that a further specialism into the knowledge base given by critical psychology (Fox and Prilleltensky, 1997) is also essential to the skillset of EPs in order to provide meaningful support and input into settings such as PMLD special schools. Additionally, meanwhile instead of becoming fixated on the knowledge they do



not currently obtain, they should set about marketing those they do. Be it problem solving frameworks, supervision skills, the use of VIG and VERP or psychological theories, these are all relevant and potential contributions to PMLD special schools. Special schools indicated the value of high level research based knowledge in relation to learning and how to overcome barriers to learning. All these represent the EPs 'value added'.

So let's reflect on a quote from one special school *'Firstly information training to teachers to let them know how the educational psychologists can support us'*. Perhaps this is where all EP services should start. Perhaps then, a shared understanding will be fostered and the contribution will begin to evolve.

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## Appendices

### Appendix A

#### Summary of the literature review process

Search date	13/05/2016
Databases	Psycinfo; PsychARTICLES
Search limitations	Peer reviewed
Primary search terms	<i>'Profound and Multiple Learning Difficult*' OR 'Profound Intellectual Disabilit*' OR 'Significant learning disabilit*' OR 'Mental Retardation'</i>
Secondary search terms	<i>AND 'Special School' OR 'Special Education' OR 'Specialist provision'</i>  <i>AND 'Educational Psycholog*' OR 'Psycholog*' OR 'Support Services' OR 'Professional' OR 'Multidisciplinary Team'</i>
Number of results	N = 99
Exclusion criteria	Items predating the year 2000  English language articles
Articles selected	Having applied the exclusion criteria and successfully obtaining the full articles  N = 12

## **Appendix B**

<b>No.</b>	<b>Date Published</b>	<b>Author</b>	<b>Title</b>	<b>Country</b>	<b>Research Purpose</b>	<b>Participants</b>	<b>Methodology</b>	<b>Results and Implications</b>
1	2011	Strogiolos, Lacey, Xanthacou & Kailia	Collaboration and integration of services in Greek special schools: two different models of delivering school services	Greece	To understand collaboration and the integration of services and the effectiveness of these among pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties (PMLD) in Greece	5 special schools, N = 10 pupils and their parents.	Qualitative: multiple case study. Observations and semi structured interviews used.	Service integration and collaboration found to be more effective when teachers, health and social professionals work under same management. Suggested expansion of model to include EPs, social workers and health therapists. Implications for the structure of special schools in England and the position of professionals within them.
2	2013	Broomhead	Preferential treatment or unwanted in mainstream schools? The perceptions of parents and teachers in regards to pupils with special educational needs and challenging behaviour	UK	To explore the perceptions of parents and teachers regarding the differential treatment or stigma experienced by pupils with challenging behaviour including CYP with SEMH, Down Syndrome and PMLD.	N =10 parents, 15 educational practitioners.	Qualitative: Semi structured interviews.	Children with challenging behaviour were perceived as both 'unwanted' and receiving 'preferential' treatment. Difficulties in managing challenging behaviour in mainstream are highlighted. Implications for how staff interpret challenging behaviour in CYP with SEN.
3	2007	Simmons, B, & Bayliss, P	The role of special schools for children with profound and multiple learning difficulties: is segregation always best?	UK	To illuminate issues related to supporting including of children with PMLD in a special school for children with SLD in SW of England.	One special school in SW England.	Qualitative: Observations. Interpretivist methodology and a grounded, ethnographic approach. Use of Semi structured interviews.	School staff found to lack sufficient understanding of PMLD stemming from few opportunities for additional training resulting in inappropriate educational experiences. Implications for training of staff working with CYP with PMLD.
4	2014	Poppes, P.,	Addressing	The	A study of how self-	30 people	Qualitative:	Found that all participants exhibited

		Van derPutten, A., & Vlaskamp, C.	Challenging Behavior in People with Profound Intellectual and Multiple Disabilities: Analysing the Effects of Daily Practice.	Netherlands	injurious, stereotypical, destructive, or aggressive behaviours are addressed in daily practice in residential facilities for 181 children and adults with PMLD.	(children and adults) with PIMD demonstrating highest prevalence, frequency and perceived severity of challenging behaviour.	Recent Individual Plans (IPs) of the 30 CYP and adults were selected for analyses.	challenging behaviour on an hourly or daily basis. Despite this however, recording often not noted in the IPs and not specific. Implied importance of record keeping to inform support provided for these CYP and adults and importance of staff knowledge in this area.
5	2014	Crombie, R., Sullivan, L., Walker, Warnock, R	Unconscious and unnoticed professional practice with an outstanding school for children and young people with complex learning difficulties and disabilities.	UK	To find meaningful frameworks for identifying and developing unnoticed and unconscious professional practice in a special school for CYP with severe and multiple and profound learning difficulties.	One school for CYP with severe and multiple and profound learning difficulties. Consultation with staff and parents (number not stated).	Qualitative: Case study. 15 Observations by EP. Staff provided professional vignettes of their practice. Consultation with staff and parents.	Empathy was found to be at the heart of teachers practice with CYP with SLD and PMLD. This was related to both relationships and communication. Implications for the importance of empathy in working with this cohort and how this can be embedded in practice.
6	2009	Male, D., & Rayner, M.	Who goes to SLD schools in England? A follow-up study.	England	Focus on aspects of policy and provision for pupils with PMLD who attend special schools in England.	321 SLD schools in England. 167 responses.	Quantitative: Survey approach using postal questionnaires.	EPs most prevalent of support services in the schools but provided the least number of support hours of all the support services. Variation in support the schools received from various support services. Overall level of support considered inadequate. Implications for staff training highlighted and inclusion opportunities for PMLD students.
7	2007	Ashdown, R., & Darlington, C.	Special school reorganisation by a local unitary authority: some lessons learned.	UK	To report on the process and outcomes of special school reorganisation in one local authority with particular emphasis up implication for education of CYP with PMLD.	Not reported	Qualitative: Consultation with parents (via meetings although format not stated) and consultations with staff	Parents and teachers shared similar concerns regarding meeting the needs of all of the pupils and loss of expertise because specialists were thin on the ground. Staff conscious of their lack of knowledge of working with PMLD students. Implications for staff training in the area of PMLD and the implications of PMLD/MLD/SLD schools on staff and

								students.
8	2005	Jones, P.	Teachers' view of their pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties.	UK	Exploring the views of a small group of teachers of pupils with PMLD towards their students.	N = 14. Participants were teachers, 3 male and 11 female. All worked in segregated provision.	Mixed methods. Questionnaires, individual and group interviews. Questionnaires formed basis of individual interview.	Found that the teachers viewed the group of learners as incurring neurological damage. Aspects of development made up the classification of PMLD, focusing mainly on intellect and communication. Highlighted need to ensure contemporary understandings of PMLD and disability.
9	2004	Hayes, J	Visual annual reviews: how to include pupils with learning difficulties in their educational reviews.	UK	Describe the development of the visual annual review as a practical, child centred planning tool and the effectiveness of this tool to be evaluated.	Year 6 pupil with Moderate Learning difficulties.	Qualitative: Case study	The use of a visual annual review was rated by all adults involved on a Likert scale as 'very good', with SENCo reported that it was 'more child-centred' and relevant to the pupil. Implications are the use of visual annual reviews as a child-centred tool to be used by schools at a time of pupil's transition. Much further research is needed however if this method is to be used with CYP with PMLD and the study indicates the need for further research in this area.
10	2014	Martin, T., & Alborz, A.	Supporting the education of pupils with profound intellectual and multiple disabilities: the views of teaching assistants regarding their own learning and development needs.	UK	Explore the views of 17 teaching assistants and 5 teachers regarding the extent to which TA training equips them to support pupils with complex learning needs.	N = 23. 17 teaching assistants and 5 teachers.	Qualitative study: semi structured interviews and questionnaires.	Teaching assistants reported difficulty in accessing appropriate external training for support CYP with PIMD. Opportunities for in class training on behaviour management and communication were limited. Implications for training of teaching assistants to best support CYP with PIMD.
11	2006	Goss, P	Meaning-led learning for pupils with severe and profound and multiple learning	UK	A closer focus on the emotional factors and careful identification of what is meaning to pupils with PMLD	N = 5 (parents of children with PMLD =3, Parents of children with SLD = 2)	Qualitative: In-depth Interviews and one retrospective case study	Parents were able to give a clear picture of how their child learns and reflect on what development had taken place in regards to their child's responses since starting school. A meaning audit' is proposed by

			difficulties.		achieved through analysing findings from interviews with parents and carers about their perceptions of what is meaningful for their children.			the author to capture this information and feed into school planning for the individual CYP.
12	2001	Porter, J., Ouvry, C., Morgan, M., and Downs, C.	Interpreting the communication of people with profound and multiple learning difficulties.	UK	To highlight some of the issues involved in interpretation the communication behaviours of people with PMLD including the importance of inference and intention.	N = 1	Qualitative: Case study of a 14 year old boy with PMLD; Peter. Use of observations and interviews	Views and perceptions were collected from various people involved in Peter's life and similarities and differences in the ways in which Peter communicated with those around him and visa versa was noted in addition to how communication this was interpreted. Implications focus on the importance of gathering information from varied sources in different contexts and the importance of checking that interpretations of communications are accurate and continue to have the same meaning.
13	2004	Gilman, R., & Gabriel, S.	Perception of School Psychological Services by Education Professionals: Results from a multi-state Survey Pilot Study	US	To investigate educators perception of the role and function of school psychologists.	N = 1720 including school psychologists (n = 87), teachers (n = 1332) and administrators (n = 88).	Quantitative: participants completed the 'School Psychology Perceptions Survey'.	Significant between-group differences found regarding knowledge, satisfaction and perceived helpfulness of school psychological services. Substantial differences found regarding role and function expectation of the role and function of school psychologists.
14	2007	Gilman, R., & Medway, F.J.	Teachers' Perceptions of School Psychology: A Comparison of Regular and Special Education Teacher Ratings.	US	To study how regular and special education teachers from eight school districts rate their knowledge and satisfaction with school psychological services. Perceived helpfulness	N = 1522 regular education and special education teachers from eight school districts in four states. 1297 regular education	Quantitative: participants completed the 'School Psychology Perceptions Survey'.	Regular education teachers reported less knowledge of school psychology compared to special education teachers, saw them as less helpful to teachers and reported a lower satisfaction with the school psychologist service. Both groups had limited understanding of the roles and functions of the school psychologists and



					to teachers and children was also assessed in addition to how both groups rated the perceptions of school psychologist's role vs school counsellor's roles.	teachers and 211 special education teachers.		both considered the school counsellors to provide more services.
15	2007	Boyle, J.M.E., and MacKay, T.	Evidence for the Efficacy of Systemic Models of Practice from a Cross-sectional Survey of Schools' Satisfaction with their Educational Psychologists	Scotland	A follow up survey of the involvement of EPs in pupil support in mainstream primary and secondary schools.	91 primary schools and 21 secondary schools in Scotland. Respondents were head teachers or principal teachers of pupil support.	Quantitative: Questionnaires with five point likert scales (1 = very much, 5 = not involved).	Significantly higher levels of satisfaction with what the EPs were current contributing was found compared to previous surveys. Over 70% of head teachers valued EP input. Changes in the practice of EPs was highlighted, suggesting more EP involvement at strategic and systemic level whilst schools still appeared to want 'more of everything' which included work at all levels (individual to family and school).
16	2006	Farrell, P., Woods, K., Lewis, S., Rooney, S., Squires, G., & O'Connor, M.	A review of the functions and contributions of Educational Psychologists in England and Wales in light of "Every Child Matters: Change for Children".	England and Wales	To highlight the contribution EPs make towards addressing the five Every Child Matters outcomes. To evaluate their role in statutory assessment of pupils with SEN and contribution to promotion of effective multiagency work within Children's Services.	Questionnaires: EPs (n = 276), PEPs (n=101), schools (n = 404), local authority officers (65), educational welfare officers (n = 10), SLTs (n = 5), social workers(n = 38), CAMHS (n = 12), child clinical psychologists (n = 11), portage services (n = 18), YOT (n = 5), school counsellors and nurses (n = 1),	Mixed methods: including questionnaires, interviews and site visits.	66% of special schools provided examples related to EPs individual child work. This was in comparison to 42% of EPs and 30% of PEPs. 20% of the examples given by EPs related to training in comparison to only 7% of special schools and interestingly, only 6% of PEPs. Special school and EPs provided similar proportion of examples however relating to consultations (20% special schools; 25% EPs) where PEPs provided the highest number of examples in this area at 42%.

						and programme directors for EP training courses (n = 11).  91 parent questionnaires, 10 pupil interviews in addition to telephone calls and site visits.		
17	2000	Kelly, D., & Gray, C.	Educational Psychology Services (England): Current role, good practice and future directions. the research report	UK	To determine current scope and balance of work of EPS in England; elicit views on future priorities and direction for EPS and identify barriers to effecting a shift in the balance of EPs work.	144 LEA/educational psychology services and 348 schools (128 primary, 152 secondary and 68 special schools).  234 people interviewed during 87 group interviews.	Mixed methods: postal questionnaires, LEA case studies & submissions from interested parties.	80% of schools surveyed wanted and get EPs contribution to multi-agency planning and reviews with school staff. 80% of all types of schools received less than one hour of training or none at all from the EPS during April 1998-March 1999. 50% of schools stated that they would like this service going forward. Special schools wanted more in-service training with priorities including behaviour management and counselling, developing teachers' skills, and training staff to deal with children with more complex special needs.
18	1999	Wright, J., & and Kersner, M.	Teachers and Speech and Language Therapists Working with Children with Physical Disabilities: Implications for Inclusive Education.	UK	Focus on the ways in which teachers and SLTs work together with children with PD and possible implications for teachers and SLTs working together in mainstream schools.	N = 54 special schools across England. 62 questionnaires from teachers and 47 from SLTs.	Quantitative: questionnaire, analysed using descriptive statistics.	A large number of adults working within the classroom was found. 26% respondents reported disadvantages in working together, mainly concerning time. All reported a positive approach to joint working practice.
19	2005	Lawson, H., Waite, S., and	Distinctiveness of curriculum	UK	To discuss the curriculum for students	N = 125 Key stage 4 coordinators in	Quantitative: postal	Specific aims for Key Stage 4 were consistently highlighted, including

		Roberston, C.	provision at 14 to 16 for students with learning difficulties: opportunities and challenges		with severe and profound and multiple learning difficulties aged 14-16.	settings for severe and profound and multiple learning difficulties	questionnaire.  Quantitative analysis carried out using coding categories derived from two researchers.	achievement of accreditation, preparation for post-16 and development of life skills and independence. Differences to Key Stage 3 included increased choice and autonomy. Age intake influenced transition work carried out with students.
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## Appendix C

### School of Psychology Research Ethics Committee

## NOTICE OF ETHICS REVIEW DECISION

### For research involving human participants

BSc/MSc/MA/Professional Doctorates in Clinical, Counselling and Educational Psychology

REVIEWER: Paul Penn

Course: Professional Doctorate in Educational and Child Psychology

STUDENT: Sophie Hopkins

SUPERVISOR: Helena Bunn

Title of proposed study: Work to be done? Exploring the Current Contribution of Educational Psychologists to Special Schools for Children and Young People with Profound and Multiple Learning Difficulties

### DECISION OPTIONS:

- 1. APPROVED, BUT MINOR AMENDMENTS ARE REQUIRED BEFORE THE RESEARCH COMMENCES** (see Minor Amendments box below): In this circumstance, re-submission of an ethics application is not required but the student must confirm with their supervisor that all minor amendments have been made before the research commences. Students are to do this by filling in the confirmation box below when all amendments have been attended to and emailing a copy of this decision notice to her/his supervisor for their records. The supervisor will then forward the student's confirmation to the School for its records.

## DECISION ON THE ABOVE-NAMED PROPOSED RESEARCH STUDY

*(Please indicate the decision according to one of the 3 options above)*

**APPROVED, BUT MINOR AMENDMENTS ARE REQUIRED BEFORE THE RESEARCH COMMENCES**

### **Minor amendments required** *(for reviewer):*

- The consent form is asking for participant's names. Would the researcher need to be able to associate individual forms with the relevant data to confirm that each participant has signed a form, if challenged? If so, what steps will be taken to prevent a 3<sup>rd</sup> party being able to perform such a data reconciliation exercise? In any case, one should also specify how personal information will be retained and destroyed.
- Since a 3<sup>rd</sup> Party survey tool is being used, are there any assurances that the proprietors of the tool do not have access to the data. Is there any option to transfer the data to a local PC and have the on-line data deleted?
- Please specify in the consent form that participants can withdraw without any disadvantage to them and without giving an explanation.
- Just a thought but is there any requirement for the participant to confirm on the consent form that their employer/institution does not require any research they participate in to have gone through an ethics appraisal at their end?

### **Major amendments required** *(for reviewer):*

### **ASSESSMENT OF RISK TO RESEACHER** *(for reviewer)*

If the proposed research could expose the researcher to any of kind of emotional, physical or health and safety hazard? Please rate the degree of risk:

HIGH

☐

MEDIUM

☒

LOW

*Reviewer comments in relation to researcher risk (if any):*

**Reviewer** *(Typed name to act as signature): Paul Penn*

**Date:** 08/02/16

*This reviewer has assessed the ethics application for the named research study on behalf of the School of Psychology Research Ethics Committee*

**Confirmation of making the above minor amendments** *(for students):*

I have noted and made all the required minor amendments, as stated above, before starting my research and collecting data.

Student's name *(Typed name to act as signature):* Sophie Hopkins

Student number: u1430386

Date: 03.03.16

*(Please submit a copy of this decision letter to your supervisor with this box completed, if minor amendments to your ethics application are required)*

**PLEASE NOTE:**

\*For the researcher and participants involved in the above named study to be covered by UEL's insurance and indemnity policy, prior ethics approval from the School of Psychology (acting on behalf of the UEL Research Ethics Committee), and confirmation from students where minor amendments were required, must be obtained before any research takes place.

\*For the researcher and participants involved in the above named study to be covered by UEL's insurance and indemnity policy, travel approval from UEL (not the School of Psychology) must be gained if a researcher intends to travel overseas to collect data, even if this involves the researcher travelling to his/her home country to conduct the research. Application details can be found here:

<http://www.uel.ac.uk/gradschool/ethics/fieldwork/>

Appendix D

Cover emails

Educational Psychologists

Dear all

I am a Year 2 Trainee Educational Psychologist at the University of East London and I am conducting research into how Educational Psychologists contribute to special schools for children and young people with profound and multiple learning difficulties. Part of my research is finding the views of educational psychologists about working with special schools specialised in profound and multiple learning difficulties. I am interested in collecting the views of all Educational Psychologists, whether you currently work with a special school or not.

My research is being supervised by Dr Helena Bunn and has met all the university's requirements for conducting it. I very much hope that you and your service will be interested to participate in this study. This email contains a link to the online survey for educational psychologists, which should take no longer than 10 minutes to complete.

Please follow the link provided which should take you directly to the questionnaire, alternative please copy and paste it into your browser. If there are any problems please get in touch and I will do my best to sort them right away.

<https://www.smartsurvey.co.uk/s/WJ2GW/>

You may have already received this email directly through your service email and completed the survey. If this is the case, please do not complete the survey twice. If you haven't however, I would be grateful if you could complete the online survey.

Please feel free to also distribute this email and link to other educational psychologist colleagues you may know. As some respondents have reported experiencing difficulties with the previous email link, I would be grateful if you redistributed the new link above to your colleagues.

Thank you for your time.

Sophie Winter

Trainee Educational Psychologist (University of East London)



Special School staff

Dear school

I am a Year 2 Trainee Educational Psychologist at the University of East London and I am conducting research into how educational psychologists contribute to special schools like yours. **My research is being supervised by Dr Helena Bunn and has met all the university's requirements for conducting it.**

Your thoughts and recent experiences about Educational Psychologists are important and hence I would like to invite you to take part in this study, by completing a brief online survey, which should not take any longer than 10 minutes of your time.

I very much hope that you and your school will be interested to participate in this study. This email contains a link to the online survey for the schools.

Please follow the link provided which should take you directly to the questionnaire, alternative please copy and paste it into your browser. If there are any problems please get in touch and I will do my best to sort them right away.

I would be grateful if this email and link could be forwarded to the staff within your school.

Thank you for your time.

Sophie Winter

Trainee Educational Psychologist (University of East London)

NAPEP email

Dear PEPs

I am a Year 2 Trainee Educational Psychologist at the University of East London and I am conducting research into how Educational Psychologists contribute to special schools for children and young people with profound and multiple learning difficulties. Part of my research is finding the views of educational psychologists about working with special schools specialised in profound and multiple learning difficulties.

I very much hope that you and your service will be interested to participate in this study. This email contains a link to the online survey for educational psychologists, which should take no longer than 10 minutes to complete.

Please follow the link provided which should take you directly to the questionnaire, alternative please copy and paste it into your browser. If there are any problems please get in touch and I will do my best to sort them right away.

You may have already received this email directly through your service email and may have completed and shared the survey. If this is the case, please do not complete the survey twice. If you haven't however, I would be grateful if you could complete the online survey. Please feel free to also distribute this email and link other educational psychologist colleagues you may know.

I would be grateful if this email and link could be forwarded to the staff within your service/practice.

Thank you for your time.

Sophie Winter

Trainee Educational Psychologist (University of East London)

EPNET email

Dear colleague,

I am a Year 2 Trainee Educational Psychologist at the University of East London and I am conducting research into how Educational Psychologists contribute to special schools for children and young people with profound and multiple learning difficulties. Part of my research is finding the views of educational psychologists about working with special schools specialised in profound and multiple learning difficulties.

I very much hope that you and your service will be interested to participate in this study. This email contains a link to the online survey for educational psychologists, which should take no longer than 10 minutes to complete.

Please follow the link provided which should take you directly to the questionnaire, alternative please copy and paste it into your browser. If there are any problems please get in touch and I will do my best to sort them right away.

You may have already received this email directly through your service or another avenue and may have completed the survey. If this is the case, please do not complete the survey twice. If you haven't however, I would be grateful if you could complete the online survey. Please feel free to also distribute this email and link other educational psychologist colleagues you may know.

Thank you for your time.

Sophie Winter

Trainee Educational Psychologist (University of East London)

## Appendix E

### Research and Consent Information

My name is Sophie Winter and I am a Trainee Educational Psychologist at the University of East London (UEL). As part of my training I am researching the current contribution of the Educational Psychologist (EP) to maintained special schools which cater for children and young people with Profound and Multiple Learning Difficulties (PMLD) in England. I am interested in asking the professionals involved about their views in order to develop a better understanding. The full title of the research project is:

*Work to be done? Exploring the Current Contribution of Educational Psychologists to Special Schools which cater for Children and Young People with Profound and Multiple Learning Difficulties*

### Definition of Profound and Multiple Learning Difficulties/Disabilities (PMLD)

Children and Young People with PMLD have more than one disability, the most significant of which is a profound learning disability. All people who have profound and multiple learn disabilities have greater difficulty communicating. They may also have additional sensory or physical disabilities, complex health needs or mental health difficulties. They also present with some behavioural difficulties (adapted from the PMLD Network definition of PMLD, 2016).

### Why is this research being done?

There is an increased number of children and YP entering special schools who have Profound and Multiple Learning Difficulties (PMLD).

EPs have been identified as having a role in supporting these students. I wish to find out about the current contribution from the perspective of both the EP themselves and special school staff.

### What does the study involve?

The research is taking place through an online survey via Smart Survey ([smartsurvey.co.uk](https://smartsurvey.co.uk)). The link is provided in the email attached to this letter. The survey will only take 10 minutes to complete online.

Before agreeing to take part in the study, it is important that you are aware of the following

### Anonymity

The survey you complete cannot be accessed by anyone other than the researcher or anyone who is working with me to assist in the completion of the research. The survey will be completed anonymously and no names will be requested. This will ensure that no link is made to any institution.

### Privacy and Data Storage

The survey tool used adheres to the UK data protection laws and will be stored securely (<https://www.smartsurvey.co.uk/privacy-policy>). The information will be analysed using a statistical software programme and stored in accordance with UEL data storage procedures for research.

### The Right to Withdraw

You retain the right to withdraw from participation in the survey up until the point of data analysis. You can withdraw without any disadvantage to yourself and without giving an explanation. It is important to note that completion of this survey is entirely voluntary.

### What if I would like to find out more about this study?

If you have any questions about the study or if you would like to discuss it further please feel free to contact me via email: [u1430386@uel.ac.uk](mailto:u1430386@uel.ac.uk)  
Thank you!

## **Appendix F**

### **Original proposed survey questions (EP and Special School staff) and amendments following Expert Jury and Participation Validation group**

#### **Proposed survey questions - EPs**

Role - EP/SEP/DPEP/PEP/Trainee EP

If specialist role - what is it?

*Feedback/changes: to provide options for EPs to choose from to increase ease of completion/save time.*

Area - Central, North, North East, North West, Midlands, South, South West, South East, East, London

*Feedback/changes: No need to be so specific; North, South, East and West sufficient*

Service Delivery - Fully Traded, Part Traded, LA based

How long have you been an EP?

*Feedback/changes: Irrelevant to the research questions#*

What was your experience/profession before becoming an EP?

*Feedback/changes: Irrelevant to the research questions*

Experience working with special schools

*Feedback/changes: Experience working with PMLD specifically provides answers more related to research questions.*

Experience working with PMLD special schools in role as EP

*Feedback/changes: Merge with question above.*

Experience working with PMLD outside of special school

*Feedback/changes: May be a leading question/suggest the importance of this to those completing the survey. Is this relevant to the research question? What is the purpose of asking this? Removed.*

Who within the special school facilities your involvement/visits?

*Feedback/changes: Rephrase to 'who is your main point of contact'. Also be more specific re involvement/visits e.g. direct and indirect contact. Subsequently split into two questions re direct contact (visits) and indirect contact (emails and telephone support).*

How would you rate your relationship with your special school?

*Feedback/changes: PMLD special school. Provide a rating scale for the EPs to use e.g. in-existent, poor, adequate, good, and excellent. Allow for comments.*

How confident would you rate your knowledge on working with individual children and YP with PMLD?

*Feedback/changes: Is this answering the research question on what EPs are currently providing? Is this leading/a loaded question with an assumption that this is an important factor? Removed.*

Where have you gained your knowledge, if any, in this field?

*Feedback/changes: As above, removed.*

How confident would you rate working with special schools for children and YP with PMLD?

Have you recently (in the past two years) received training on working with children with PMLD?

*Feedback/changes: This can be covered in qualitative questions such as opportunities and barriers. Doesn't require an additional question \*removed\*.*

Do you consider yourself to have adequate knowledge of low incident disabilities?

*Feedback/changes: Is this relevant? \*removed\**

What do you see as your contribution to your PMLD special school (past or present) - systemic, individual work, training

*Feedback/changes: Rephrase to 'what has been your current contribution' and provide a list of examples which EPs can choose from (can choose more than one). Provide opportunity to comment or add 'other'.*

Is there any additional work you would like to carry out/have carried out?

*Feedback/changes: Rephrase to 'what is your ideal contribution to PMLD special schools?'*

Do you think it is the role of all EPs to work with special schools or the function of the senior specialist EP in this area?

*Feedback/changes: Rephrase to 'whose role do you think...'*

Do you consider working with the parents part of your role in supporting the special school?

*Feedback/changes: This can be covered in qualitative questions such as opportunities and barriers/and current/ideal contribution rather than a separate question. \*added to a choice of other questions\**

Bearing in mind the needs of the school staff, what do you think the EP could contribute to supporting them? (training, emotional support, supervision?)

*Feedback/changes: As above.*

Have you sought additional CPD training related to PMLD related issues/knowledge?

*Feedback/changes: Does not appear relevant to the research question as wanting to find out what the current contribution of the EP to PMLD special schools are \*removed\**

What are potential barriers to carrying out the work you have identified above?

*Feedback/changes: Provide two qualitative questions: Potential barriers and Potential opportunities. Provide examples for each (three at most).*

### Proposed survey questions - Special School staff

What is your role within the school?

*Feedback/changes: Provide examples for the participants to choose from.*

How is your special school funded?

*Feedback/changes: As above.*

Area in which your school resides? Central, North, North East, North West, Midlands, South, South West, South East, East, London

*Feedback/changes: As EP survey, change to North, South, East and West.*

How long have you worked within PMLD special schools?

*Feedback/changes: Is this relevant to the research question? \*removed\**

How much involvement would you consider yourself to have had with an EP in your current or previous role in a similar setting?

*Feedback/changes: Be more specific about involvement with the EP (as per the EP survey). Ask them regarding visits and indirect contact and provide them with options such as none, rarely etc. \*changes made, see final survey\*.*

How would you rate your relationship with your school EP?

How would you rate your school's relationship with the school EP?

*Feedback/changes: Don't believe both questions are necessary and relevant \*removed\**

Which of the following do you have experience of the EP providing?

*Feedback/changes: Provide examples of contribution EPs have made to the school such as: systemic (need to explain what this is), individual work, training etc. \*changes made\**

What would your ideal contribution from an EP look like?

*Feedback/changes: Provide them with examples to choose from (think of ease of completion of survey).*

What was useful for you/what change did you see for the child as a direct consequence of the EPs involvement?

*Feedback/changes: consider use of 'impact' – reworded to include impact.*

Bearing in mind the needs of the pupils in your school, what skills do you believe the EP has to contribute to your setting?

*Feedback/changes: The 'distinct contribution of the EP' to your setting when considering the additional professionals worked with \*changed to question 14 in final survey\**

EPs often provided recommendations following involvement with a CYP. What impact have these had on your practice with CYP with PMLD?

*Feedback/changes: May not be applicable to all participants.*

What do you see as the barriers to working with EPs in your setting?

*Feedback/changes: As per the EP survey, include a question for opportunities and one for barriers. Qualitative answer. Provide examples.*

*Feedback/changes: As per the EP survey, could ask whose role they believe it is to work in these settings (EPs or specialist EPs?).*

*General feedback included:*

- Consider what training they would like to receive and what EPs feel confident in providing;
- Use of examples in questions such as current contribution so participants can choose (may be preferable and quicker than providing qualitative answers to each question);
- Allow an 'other' answer for each question to allow participants to expand on answers or provide different answers to ones provided;
- To make questions specific i.e. the previous academic year;
- Ensure that all participants have to provide consent before completing the survey (non-optional).



## Appendix G

### Final EP Survey Questions and Example EP Response

## Educational Psychologists' contribution to Special Schools in England - Educational Psychologists' views

### Response 1

#### Respondent Details

Information	
Respondent Number: 1	Respondent ID: 39958325
Date Started: 08/06/2016 17:48:33	Date Ended: 08/06/2016 17:57:04
Time Taken: 8 mins, 51 secs	Translation: English

Q1. I have read and understood the information and consent form and give consent to take part in the survey
Yes

Q2. What is your current role?
Other (please specify): Independent Psychology doing some locum work for LEAs

Q3. Please specify your area of specialism, if applicable?
Specific Learning Difficulties/ Learning difficulties Autism Spectrum Disorder

Q4. What geographical area do you work in within England?
West

Q5. What is your model of service delivery?
Private Practice

Q6. As an Educational Psychologist, how much experience do you have working with children and young people with Profound and Multiple Learning Difficulties?
Between 1 to 3 years of experience

Q7. Are you currently a link Educational Psychologist (main point of contact) for a special school which caters for children and young people with PMLD?
Yes

Q8. Have you ever been a link Educational Psychologist (main point of contact) for a special school which caters for children and young people with Profound and Multiple Learning Difficulties?
Yes

Q9. If applicable, who is your main point of contact at your special school?
Deputy head teacher

Q10. Is there anyone else you would like/would have liked to have regular contact with at the special school?
SENCo
Class teacher

Q11. How often do you have scheduled visits with your PMLD special school in the school year 2015-2016?
5-10 days

Q12. How often do you have indirect contact with your special school (e.g. via email/telephone)?
1-2 days per year

Q13. How would you rate the relationship between you and your special school?
Good
Comments: If possible, describe the reasons for this rating below We discuss a wide range of concerns with regard to pupils. The deputy head also discusses issues unrelated to school

Q14. What has been your previous/current contribution to a special school for children and young people with Profound and Multiple Learning Difficulties?
Individual work (including assessments)
Work with parents
Consultations
Statutory work (transfer reviews; Education, Health and Care Plan meetings/assessment/ annual reviews)
Attendance and contribution to multi-agency meetings/assessment

Q15. What would your ideal contribution look like to a special school for children and young people with profound and multiple learning difficulties?
Individual work (including assessments)
Interventions
Staff training
Work with parents
Attendance and contribution to multi-agency meetings/assessment

Q16. Focusing on training, what training do you feel you could offer/ feel confident in delivering to special schools for children and young people with profound and multiple learning difficulties?
Support staff training
Training on specific disabilities

Q17. Whose responsibility do you think it is to work with special schools for children and young people with profound and multiple learning difficulties?

Specialist EPs

Q18. Please list up to 3 potential opportunities for Educational Psychologists to work with special schools catering for children and young people with profound and multiple learning difficulties. This could include areas such as: Staff training Systemic work (whole school/class work) Parent support/work Transition work

Linking in with charities  
Parent training  
Specific strategies e.g. EDY

Q19. Please list up to 3 potential barriers to working with special schools catering for children and young people with profound and multiple learning difficulties. This could include areas such as: EP time not available/ bought in by the special school Educational Psychologists lack of up to date knowledge in the area Difficult working relationship with special school

A private psychologist is brought in and work is sometimes left to him  
Having less knowledge than the staff/less practical experience  
Personality clashes

## Appendix H

### Final Special School Survey Questions and Example Response

## Educational Psychologists' contribution to special schools in England - Schools' views

### Response 1

#### Respondent Details

Information	
<b>Respondent Number:</b> 1	<b>Respondent ID:</b> 39958373
<b>Date Started:</b> 08/08/2016 17:49:57	<b>Date Ended:</b> 08/08/2016 18:07:35
<b>Time Taken:</b> 17 mins, 38 secs	<b>Translation:</b> English

Q1. I have read and understood the information and consent form and give consent to take part in the survey
Yes

Q2. What is your role within the school?
Management staff

Q3. How is your special school funded?
Local Authority Maintained

Q4. Geographical area (within England) in which your school resides
North

Q5. Do you have a named Educational Psychologist(s) for your school or do you contact the Local Authority directly if you require an Educational Psychologist's input?
Contact the named Educational Psychologist

Q6. How often is your school visited by an Educational Psychologist?
5-10 days

Q7. In the school year 2015-2016, how much direct contact have you had with an Educational Psychologist?
Considerable (e.g. worked directly alongside the Educational Psychologist with a child/class) More than 10 times

Q8. If applicable, how effective was the Educational Psychologist's involvement?
Moderate

Q9. Educational Psychologist often provide recommendations in their reports following a piece of work. If applicable, what impact have these recommendations had on your practice with children and young people with PMLD?
Some impact

Q10. How would you rate the relationship between yourself and the Educational Psychologist(s)?
Excellent

Q11. During the academic year 2015-2016, what work has been carried out by an Educational Psychologist with students in your school?

Individual work (including assessments)

Statutory work (transfer reviews; Education, Health and Care Plan meetings/assessment/ annual reviews)

Attendance of multi-agency meetings

Q12. What would your ideal contribution from the Educational Psychology look like?

Interventions

Attendance and contribution to multi-agency meetings/assessment

Other (please specify):

Assessment of specific needs

Q13. Thinking of training, what training would you like an Educational Psychologist to provide?

Training on specific disabilities

Other (please specify):

assessment screening

Q14. Baring in mind research that indicates a child within a school like yours can have involvement from up to 25 different professionals, what do you see as the distinctive contribution of the Educational Psychologists?

Supporting the assessment and appropriate placement of children matched to need within the LA. Supporting the EHCP process, and parents through this process. Helping parents come to terms with their child's disabilities and the impact of these on their learning potential.

Q15. Whose responsibility do you think it is to work with special schools?

Specialist Educational Psychologists

Q16. List up to 3 potential opportunities you believe may exist for Educational Psychologists working with special schools such as yours. This could include areas such as: Training Systemic work (whole school/whole class work) Parent support/workshops

We have a history of effective partnership work with Ed Psych's and Clinical Psych's. There is a great deal of overlap between the two I guess with the Clinical team working more closely with families in the home setting and Ed Psych's in the school setting. We have a brilliant Parenting class ongoing that originated from team work with our psychology colleagues and we adopt the THRIVE approach in school.

Training is always needed, however, we feel that we are able to deliver more bespoke training to meet our needs than our current Ed Psych team. We have become the specialists in our area of work, particularly in respect of PMLD and I often find our Ed Psychologists don't have the same experience or knowledge of these children's needs. If they did then I would buy into that knowledge base.

Q17. List up to 3 potential barriers you believe may affect Educational Psychologists working with special schools like yours. This could include areas such as: EP time not available/ bought in by the special school Educational Psychologist lacks of up to date knowledge in the area of PMLD Difficult working relationships with school and Educational Psychologist Other professionals involvement so Educational Psychologist not required/no value added

My experience currently is that our Ed Psychologists are totally caught up in paper work, EHCP, tribunals, avoiding tribunals, transitional work, fire fighting etc. The demand for their services couldn't be higher given the rise in our pupil population and complexity of need, however the colleagues I talk to are disillusioned with their job, sick of attending endless meetings and writing reports about children they barely know that it makes the whole system farcical and near to breaking point.

## Appendix I

### Example Content Analysis of Qualitative Information

#### EP responses

Q13. How would you rate the relationship between you and your special school?

#### Inexistent

Response	Category	Frequency
	N/a (not link EP/historical)	10
My special school does not buy into the service and therefore I do not have any contact with them. I have had contact with them in previous years however have not for the past year. Therefore I currently have not developed my relationship with new members of the senior leadership team.  They rarely ask for our input	Don't ask for input	1
Access EP in private practice so limited to SA work	Access another EP	1
	n/a	1

#### Poor

Response	Category	Frequency
	Don't have special school	2
Lack of understanding of the EP role and contribution. The Special School uses the EP service purely for Year 5 Reviews every year. It has taken some years to nurture the relationship with the EPS, who this year offered free work to demonstrate other ways of working (conducting parent workshops on the transition process).	Rigidity of way school uses EP (lack of understanding of EP role and potential contribution)	2
Lack of communication.	Lack of communication	1

#### Adequate

Response	Category	Frequency
At the moment the EPS is used in a statutory role with regard to EHCP's/statement reviews and transitions. The school does not take advantage of consultation and problem solving for provision development.  I feel there is, or has been, a difference of opinion between what we offer and what the school think or hope we offer! We have tried to address this but it can be difficult to change perceptions. For example, I think the school believe I will support them if they want a student to move to another school (e.g., due to behaviour) but I wouldn't do this unless I had been directly involved in strategies, monitoring, etc. This may be due to how the previous EP worked (8 years ago .....!).  In our area special schools have historically not valued EP input.	Understanding of EP role	3

<p>We're not clear exactly why this is but feel it is in part because the needs of children in special schools have already been identified (I.e they have an EHCP) and they have easier access to LD CAMHS who can offer more time than we are able.</p> <p>Such schools are so needing help, as everyone appears to be skilled with special needs but underneath need support to cope with demands: very needy parents and families, a number of professionals, health, social workers, community organisations...so many professionals come in and out, with no continuity of relationships...</p>		
I have not encountered any difficulties with relationships with the schools I have worked with	No difficulties	1
<p>It is currently my first year of being the link EP for this school. I have found it difficult to build up a relationship with staff as it can be difficult to get hold of people/arrange meetings which impacts on how often I am in the school.</p> <p>I am a relatively new link EP to the school and we are still in the process of developing our working relationship and establishing my role within the school.</p> <p>I don't currently have any strong relationships with staff in special schools. Case work leads me there only occasionally.</p> <p>Transformations of statements to EHCPs is causing some problems amongst senior leaders.</p>	Relationship	4
<p>There are communication issues and a lack of clarity about lines of responsibility.</p> <p>In the past, communication tended to be needs-led.</p>	Communication	3
<p>I have little work directly with our special school as I am not the link EP in our service for this school</p> <p>Not being the Link EP for Special School I don't really have a particular relationship with them.</p>	Not EP to school	2
<p>My Special School does not trade so therefore I am not able to carry out any systemic work which I think is what the school needs.</p> <p>The special school concerned does not liaise very much with SEND services, preferring instead to draw on their own expertise</p> <p>was good but change of head and school becoming academy/cuts in funding etc. have led to some deterioration.</p>	Not calling on EPS	1

## Appendix I

### Example Content Analysis of Qualitative Information

#### Special school responses

Q8 - If applicable, how effective was the Educational Psychologist's involvement?

Response	Category	Freq
Not really any new angles to the thinking we were already doing in our regular team.	No value added	1
I feel strongly that the Educational Psychologists do not have the time needed to get to know and understand the complex needs of our pupils. This is a frustration to them as well as ourselves. Currently also they do not have the training in relation to PMLD pupils.	Limited EP time	1
This year all our Ed Psych time has been to carry out assessments for initial EHC Plans for pupils new to the country.  Required to visit as part of EHC assessment  Mainly used our paperwork and suggested outcomes for EHCP transformations  EP has responsibility for implementation of EHC plans. She wanted information and gave advice on type of information to add to form and gain from parents.	Statutory work	4
Not applicable  n/a	Not applicable	4
In other years we have asked for specific help with a child where staff were struggling to meet their needs. This has often been with children on the ASD spectrum as staff knowledge of this area is limited due to the specialist nature of our school.  Highly effective systems in school only requiring additional, multi-disciplinary viewpoint for complex situations. No support provided for PMLD students, EP support tending to focus on behaviour needs	Specific input	2
Not had contact this year.	No contact	1
The Educational Psychologist was not specialised enough with children from 3-19 years of age who have profound and multiple learning difficulties with associated medical conditions and physical disabilities. Unable to offer any advice or strategies - no knowledge of complex needs pupils  Limited advice and input into the school. Have used to coordinate a behaviour review but not with significant impact on the outcome for the learner.  Very little help - our usual needs are behavioural and we have lots of skilled staff. The advice just repeats what we already know.	Lack of knowledge/impact	4



The EP reports have not directly contained any information re the pupil's cognitive level. The reports have been a collection of views from other professionals and parents. Given that there is a discrepancy between what the school believes the pupil is capable of and what the parents believe, this has not been helpful. However, the staff of the school felt very supported by the EP in the review meeting.		
<p>We have worked closely for over 10 years on various projects within the school. This has enhanced a great deal of the whole school support and enhanced the understanding of staff in dealing with the behaviour as the social and emotional aspects of children's well-being. In among this e have also met the statutory requirements within school.</p> <p>Our EP has a direct impact in the classroom and in staff training at all levels. She has brought in VIG and VERP so we become reflective practitioners and whole school initiatives such as the 5Point Scale and Dyslexia friendly schools. She also writes individual reports to assess students' needs and to request additional funding for students.</p> <p>assessment, meeting with parents, classroom observation, attendance at Annual Review</p> <p>Our attached EP worked with parents and staff members directly in a clinic setting. Her approach was 'solution focussed' using a coaching style.</p>	Sustained impact	4
<p>Depends on which one you get!</p> <p>The answers do not fit the question form.</p>	Other	2

